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THE IRON STAR

FROM MYTH TO HISTORY

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The Iron Star

And what It saw on Its Journey through the Ages

From Myth to History

By

John Preston True

Author of "Scouting for Washington," "Their Club and Ours," "Shoulder Arms," etc.

Illustrated by

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Boston

Little, Brown, & Company

1902

Ante Ed. 7869.57

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Gift of Publishers
through
Boston School Committee
May 22, 1902.

WASHINGTON
AT HOME

PREFACE.

THIS is a wonderful old world of ours, the one we live in. It is wonderful to think how it has grown, day by day, year by year, century by century, and by each step of Time just a little better worth living in. It is like a beautiful fairy story, with the great advantage of being true.

Of course none of us were here when the world began, so we did not see the beginning of it, but some of us have worked the problem backward through the years to find out what the beginning was like; and starting from a good dry spot, if you follow the wanderings of my Iron Star, I believe you will at no time be very far from the truth of the way in which girls and boys and their elders lived in the days now long ago. Will you make the journey with me?

J. P. T.

SEPTEMBER, 1899.

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THE IRON STAR

And what it saw in its Journey through the Ages from Myth to History.

SPARK I.

HOW THE STAR CAME INTO THIS WORLD.

To begin with, it all happened a very long time ago, — some say five thousand years, some say ten thousand years, and one wise man says it never happened at all; but even the wise are not wise at all times, and I am inclined to believe that it was in one of those unwise times that the doubt was raised; for I believe it happened, although I am not sure about the date.

One thing is certain: there was a time when Europe was about all forest, where it wasn't water or bare rock. There were no cities, so of course there were no policemen. There were not even kings and queens, although the present kings and queens don't like to be reminded that

there ever was a time when the world got along without any. They think it is impolite. Of course, sometimes it is impolite to tell the truth, and then one can only say nothing, or talk of the weather. So any young king or queen who reads this may go back and read it again and skip that line.

Be it as it may, there once lived in that great forest a boy and his sister. Not being able to speak their language I do not know what their names may have meant; but they had names, one sounding like a grunt, the other a hiss. Better call them Umpl and Sptz, which is as near as I can come to it. Of course Sptz was the girl; and they both believed most firmly in hobgoblins, evil spirits, wicked elves, that were ever on the watch for them in the dark; and when they heard the long cre–ak of a tree branch rubbing on another branch in the night as the wind arose, their ears told them that it was a branch, but their fears said it was a goblin, and in the night-time they believed their fears the most. If only they had fire, with its light and warmth, it would be different! So they thought many a day, when the sunlight glinted through the tree trunks and lay in spots upon the moss. Then the dark came down, and still they had no fire.

Does this seem strange? Remember, then, that matches were not made in those days. Sometimes they got fire by striking two bits of stone together. There were men who knew how to make fire by rubbing bits of wood together. Some day you might try that. I can promise you that you will get very warm; but I don't think it will be because of the fire which you make by it unless some one first shows you how, and Umpl and Sptz's father did not happen to be one of the men who knew how. It was thus a great misfortune when one day the fire went out, or, rather, was put out by the roof falling on it. You must know, that if this was before the days of cities, it was also before the days of houses, and our young friends lived in a cave. On the whole, it was a good cave, fairly high inside and small to get into, and not too smoky when the wind was right. When it wasn't they could go outside, or have a smaller fire: and when that ton of rock came down so suddenly on both fire and supper they were not at all surprised. It had happened before; but the father was angry just the same, and said that he would rather it had fallen on Sptz. Girls were not thought so much of in those days as they are now. But there! girls are like

queens: they don't like to be reminded of such things.

Well, the fire was out. So was the supper. The father picked up his war-club and spear and went out after some more, thinking over in his mind which of his neighbours had a fire and at the same time was not at war with him. He did a deal of thinking and brought to mind every cave for forty or fifty miles around, then shook his shocky head. It was of no use whatever. It was all war. So, when he came back with a bundle of hares they had to cook their supper without any fire, and every one knows how hard that is.

What was nearly as bad, they could not depend on the fire to keep out night prowlers. As they sat in the cave one night the stars in the doorway were darkened. The father had just time to spring to the entrance with a spear when in came the huge head and shoulders of a monstrous Cave Bear. The spear bit deep into the vast shaggy chest and the air was filled with such a shuddering roar that several more pieces of stone fell from the roof; and after all it was not the spear, but the sand and sharp bits of stone which Umpl flung in his eyes that made the animal back out, growling and brushing his head in a

rage. Sptz and her mother lost no time in heaping into the entrance all the stone blocks that lay around, till it was so small that they had to take some out in the morning so they themselves could go out, and the father vowed to be the death of that bear before he was a week older. But he looked blue as he said it, for he knew very well the bear would be more likely to be the death of him.

So all the more earnestly they watched the valley below them for some wreath of smoke aside from the well-known spots where enemies were cooking their dinners. Sometimes a thunder-storm would sweep across from peak to peak, and then they would all be out of the cave, looking eagerly. If a tree was struck by lightning, now, they might get fire from it. More than once a tree was struck and Umpl and Sptz raced off through the rain to the spot, regardless of the evil spirits which every Cave boy knew lived in the storm. But every time they arrived only to find that the drenching rain had washed out all of the fire but the smell, and that was not very satisfying; so they had to go disconsolately back and take the beating which they were sure to get for disappointing their elders, and had to do a double amount of work besides.

It was not all playtime with Umpl and Sptz by any means. Sptz had to help her mother about the cooking, when there was any. She also had to help tan the skins of wild animals into a beautifully soft kind of leather which they could make into cloaks for winter wear by pricking holes in them with sharp bits of bone and weaving thongs, instead of sewing edges together with needles and thread. Sptz never saw either in all her girl-life.

Umpl had his own work. Outside, hare-catching kept him busy. It is wonderful how many a family can eat when it tries hard, and when deer are scarce, or the father is a long way off on a hunt and there is no meat in the kitchen. Then he had to dig up certain juicy roots that were good — when he could find them. A great part of his time also was spent in breaking bones and stones into small pieces for his father to work up into arrowheads. Umpl hated that. He would not have minded doing the fine work about it, but just to crack bones all his spare time was not joyful; and, now that there was no fire to pull wood for, he had just so much more spare time for bone-cracking.

One afternoon both Umpl and Sptz went out together. It was not very late, and on so clear

a day one could see a long way through the glades among the tree trunks, which was something to be considered. Once when it was not so clear they had spent a long time on the outer branches of a tree waiting for a Cave Bear to get hungry enough to give them up and hunt for another dinner. But this was a better day. They knew of a log in the forest, that was all covered with vines, and this was the time of the year when also it would be covered with berries that were worth having. They gave a careful look around before sitting down, marked a tree that looked like easy climbing, and then went for the berries; but they still sat facing different ways, so that any danger which might come from any side could be seen in time for flight. Overhead they had not thought of looking.

And yet it was from overhead that danger was coming. Far up in the sky a star was falling. Why it fell no one knows; but fall it did. It came hurtling out of space, like a great fiery dragon, leaving a long flaming train across the sky that lit up the whole world like a torch. The birds in the forest fluttered and screamed in fear. The wild beasts crouched under the largest trees that were near. It looked as though the whole world was on fire!

Many miles upward, if one goes so high, he comes to a place where there is no air. As you come nearer the earth you begin to find some, although very thin indeed. Then it grows thicker, till there is enough for one to breathe and live in. But the air is wrapped around the earth like a cushion, or like a peach around its stone; and you know that even a cushion, or a football, or a bicycle tire can be blown up with air so hard that it seems like a rock and would hurt if you struck it. The star struck this cushion. It was flying so fast — hundreds of miles a second, or in the time between two ticks of a clock — that the air which it met did not have time to be pushed out of its way, and it was like running up against a hard wall. There was an enormous crash like thunder, but ten thousand thousand times as loud, and that star broke all up into pieces.

The pieces flew every way. Some went scurrying off for hundreds of miles and fell into the sea, where they made the water around them boiling hot. Some probably flew back again the way the star had come. Some perhaps flew high enough to fall into the moon itself! but one piece, about as large as a bushel basket, came zipping downward at a long angle, like a blazing ball of flame, for it had struck the air so

hard a blow that the heat of it had melted the fragment. Down it came, crashing through the great limbs of the trees beyond Umpl and Sptz with a huge rushing roar, and when it struck the earth the ground trembled for half a mile around, especially as it glanced from a ledge after diving deep in the soil, and came leaping out of the soil again only to fall with a thud a rod or two away.

It is hard to say whether Umpl or Sptz was the more frightened. Umpl thought of nothing but dragons, and was scared white. Sptz was whiter to begin with, as she lived more in the cave underground, and now that she thought the sky was falling she could think of nothing else. But she was the first to find out that they were not dead after all. Then she gave a start, and sniffed eagerly. She smelt something.

Jumping up on the log she looked around, and — no, it couldn't be! but it was, though — fire. Real fire! Smoking away merrily among the dead leaves where a bit of molten star had been scraped off by a tree trunk and had fallen. Sptz flew to it like a bird. In no time, more dead leaves were heaped around the light flame; with a shout of joy Umpl rushed to a windfall and

brought an armful of wood, and soon a royal fire was sending out light and heat, beautifully flickering upward among the trees. Umpl knew what to do now as well as any one. He hunted up two pitchy sticks and set them both alight. Then he held them before him, crossed like a pair of scissors, with the flame where the joint was; and in that way he kept them both alight, burning each other up, until they reached home. And then — what a royal supper they had!

I might tell you many more things about Umpl and Sptz. For instance, how they went to the place again in after days and found the piece of the fallen star, broken into several pieces. And how Sptz found that one of them was just the thing to crack nuts on, and Umpl found another was quite as good as a bone-cracker, till his father took it from him and made a head of it for his war-club, where it did great bone-cracking in another way. And I might tell how Umpl learned at last to take one sharp stone and, by pressing on it with another, break off little chips until what was left became a beautiful arrowhead, and how he made so many, and so many chips around the cave, and so many other chipmakers were doing like-

wise, that to-day men call the time when Umpl lived the Stone Age, for all their axes, knives, and tools seemed made of stone. Some day I may tell more. Meanwhile, now you know how the Iron Star came into this world of ours.

SPARK II.

HOW THE STAR AGAIN BEGAN TO TRAVEL.

It certainly seemed to both Umpl and Sptz that the iron mass which was once a falling star had brought good luck to them. Fire in itself was a grand thing. It was so good not to lie cold o' nights, or to be obliged to fill up the doorway with stones and pull them down in the morning. Many and many a time they went to the spot where the large piece lay and looked at it with half-frightened eyes. They could not understand it. Where did it come from? Why did it come there? When would it go away? Did a spirit throw it, or was it itself a spirit? All these and many other odd thoughts came to them because of it; and this was one of the very best things that ever happened to either. No other Cave boy or girl in the whole valley ever took the trouble to think about anything that was not connected with dinner, or the latest style of wearing burrs in their hair; and when Umpl thought so long about it that he feared it

must be a spirit, and laid his best arrowhead on it as an offering, while Sptz for the same reason brought a queer bit of bone with a feather in one end and a scrap of rabbit fur around it, the thoughts were good for them. It did for their small brains just what a boy does for his arm when he swings a club or a dumb-bell. It made them stronger, so that they could use them for other things and use them better.

Umpl, for one thing, looked upward among the trees oftener. He saw more birds, he learned their actions better and so knew better how to have roast bird for supper. So perhaps they were right about the good luck. Besides, both of them were growing up. Sptz had learned to make acorn bread and found a hollow on the top of the Iron Star which was just the thing to grind up nuts in. Umpl was two feet taller than when the star fell, and could draw a bow and send an arrow right through a stag. And one great day he met a Cave Bear and sent his flint-headed shaft whistling with such force that it broke through the hard skull of the savage beast and dropped him in his tracks.

All his life long Umpl wore on his arm an ornament made out of the longest teeth and sharpest claws of that bear; and boys and girls

looked at it and wondered if they would ever have the right to be so honored. Umpl had become a man. But he was a very young one still.

This luck did not follow every one in that long valley. There came a time when it did not rain for nearly a year. The springs stopped running. The birds flew away. The hares went, no one knew where. The stags disappeared. Food was hard to earn, and every meat-eater in the valley found it so, and many of them lived only by eating each other. Umpl's eyes were brighter, and he was thinner than in better days; yet he still managed to find some things eatable; and he laid it all to the Star. And one day he found himself a long way from the cave and among a dozen young men as hungry as himself, and each one ready to kill the other. It was very much as though they had all met there for a picnic.

It was a part of Umpl's good fortune that he had of late been carrying with him the Star-club that his father had made. On his arm gleamed the Cave Bear's teeth, grim and white; and when the others saw that they stopped to think a moment. They feared the bear. Who dared, then, to meet the Cave Bear's slayer? And then

something happened which gave them other thoughts still more unpleasant.

Straight through the glade came the rush of galloping feet, and an antlered stag swept by like a stone from a sling. So swiftly did he pass that no arrow was ready save Umpl's. His went hurtling after, straight at the back of the tossing head, and the great deer fell in a heap, stone-dead. But what had scared him?

Ah! They did not need to ask. Gaunt, grey forms were rushing toward them. Green eyes were flashing in the black shadows beyond. They did not need the long howl to tell them that it was the wolf-pack from beyond the mountains, starved out of its usual range.

There was but one thing to do — to take to the trees; and it was well that the trees near by were low limbed. Umpl was the last one up. But he was also the only one who had a great slice of that stag as a luncheon. The fact that he had it proved that the white-toothed bracelet told the truth in regard to his bravery.

While the wolves fought over their prey below Umpl looked at them and thought. The others looked without thinking. Presently the noise grew less, and Umpl looked about him and began to talk to the other young men. He

pointed out to them that one wolf, or two, would not have dared to attack them. But as a band they had made even the bracelet-wearer flee. So with themselves. One, or even two of them could not go to another land where there was more water and game; but suppose they stopped making war on each other and went as a band across the great mountains? This country was eaten out. There were not caves enough to go round among young men who wanted caves of their own. Elsewhere things might be better. They could not be worse. And he would go with them, taking Sptz, who could cook well, and the Iron Star, which would bring them luck.

It seemed a very good idea, especially to youths who had none of their own; and they agreed to form a band and go, if Umpl first would prove the luck of the Star.

The youth nodded, and held up his club.

"This was made from it. Now see!"

Tying to it one end of the long thong he always carried, Umpl flung the iron mass down on the head of a wolf that was trying to leap up within reach. The animal fell, and his mates sprang on him, as wolves will, and ate him up. Five times Umpl did it before the rest began to

take warning, and even then a pretended tumble brought them back and three more fell. The rest ran back to a wider circle, and before they got over their scare Umpl was on the ground and back again, with his bow and quiver of arrows; and that was the beginning of the end of that wolf-pack, while every youth in the trees now believed in the Star.

They found the Iron Star was heavy. It took Umpl two days to plan out a way for them to carry it, and to cut down with stone axes saplings to sling it on. But the rest looked up to him as a leader now; and when they left the valley he was their chief, with Sptz trotting on behind carrying a skin of acorn-flour, and the crossed and lighted firebrands.

It was a weary march through the mountains. For many weeks they travelled. They found more game than in the valley behind, but nowhere enough to be worth staying for, and at last one morning they found a very curious thing. Across the gorge through which they were travelling there was a barricade of trees, which had been cut down by men. But why? It could not be for war, since they were not arranged in a way suitable for that. Still, men had done it, and they looked carefully around for the cave

where the men belonged. It was better to find it than to be found by its owners.

But they did not find any. Beyond the barricade was a little meadow, shoulder deep in a curious grass with bristly heads which grew very thickly. Wading through it, beyond a thicket, the sight that met them struck them dumb with surprise! Before them was a lake. Out in the lake what seemed a cluster of dome-shaped rocks rose from the water, and a narrow path to shore was made with trunks of trees tied together. Before them, in a place fenced off, were stags of a kind they never saw before, with long smooth horns and shaggy, black hair. In among them wild pigs were grunting around a man who was feeding them, and this looked like witchcraft. Why did not the animals kill him instantly? They had met wild pigs in their old valley and held them in great respect as fighters. What kind of men were these who ruled such savage beasts? And was that a wolf, stealing toward them, and giving warning with that barking howl?

There were lively doings in that village when that howl went up. On the whole, it was well for Umpl and his party that Sptz was with them. Breaking a green branch, she went forward in

advance and spears were slowly lowered. Someone was found who could speak a few Cave-Men words, and all could use sign language; so the case was explained and Umpl welcomed. The Star was given a special welcome and a hut all to itself.

Nothing in all their lives had seemed more curious to Umpl and Sptz than those huts. They were made of twigs and reeds wattled into basketwork, and then clay plastered over all until they were water tight, and they were perched on logs driven into the bottom of the lake like piles. There were clay things on the fires, too, and by the smell they knew that some good cooking was going on; but never before had they seen a pot that would hold water or stand fire.

On the other hand, Umpl was looked at with much respect by the Lake-Dwellers (as we now call those people). He was taller than they by half a head. The tooth bracelet told its own tale, for they, too, knew the Cave Bear. So they made him presents, and of value, one of the choicest being a knife of copper. This was a great wonder to Umpl and his people. A knife which would not break, as their flint ones did, but bent and could be pounded straight again, was exceedingly odd. They even showed Umpl

a piece of copper which had been brought to the village in a large lump by some young men from a far country, and explained how the knife had been hammered out with stones.

This gave Umpl an idea. Taking a flint knife he sawed off a slice of copper from the lump and with his iron war-club he hammered it out on the Iron Star and fashioned a beautiful spear-head in no time, the iron clinking merrily beneath his blows. There was a great rush around him after that. Every one who had copper wanted it worked up, and Umpl was clear-headed enough to bargain for a hut for his people and one for himself and Sptz.

Here he lived happily for many years. He owned a share in the long-horned cattle. His men were the best hunters in the village, and the copper things he made were sought for by men who came long distances. Sometimes they brought him bars of copper. After a time some one brought tin, and two pieces fell into the fire one day, along with a copper knife, and all three were melted into one and cooled in a little hollow in the ashes after the fire was out. Umpl was astonished to find that the sharp edge of this would cut like flint, yet would not bend like copper; and he began to make regular knives and

spearheads of such material, finding out a way of making clay moulds and pouring the melted metal into them to harden into the right shapes. Of course these were far more valuable than the copper tools and they were sold here and there among the tribes of other peoples, and often travelled far from where they were made. Other people began to find out how to make them, and made so many that, although they still used flint knives too, yet people nowadays when speaking of that long ago time often call it the Bronze Age, because tin and copper, when melted together in a certain way, make bronze.

But the Iron Star's travels were not ended.

SPARK III.

HOW THE STAR WAS CARRIED ON THE WARPATH, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

JUST why it seemed necessary for Umpl and his people to go to war with anybody may not be clear. They were living very happily in their village on the lake. Their cattle were fat; their fields of that curious grass through which Umpl had waded before he knew what it was good for were sure to harvest grain enough to make bread, and Sptz had found that grain-bread was as much better than acorn-bread as sponge cake is better than gingerbread; although both gingerbread and acorn-bread are good enough for any one, when one cannot get anything better.

Sptz had found many things in that village which were just what she wanted. For one thing, out of the long, shaggy hair of the longer-horned cattle had been found a way of spinning thread and weaving cloth in pretty patterns. Sptz could dress a deerskin beautifully, and make

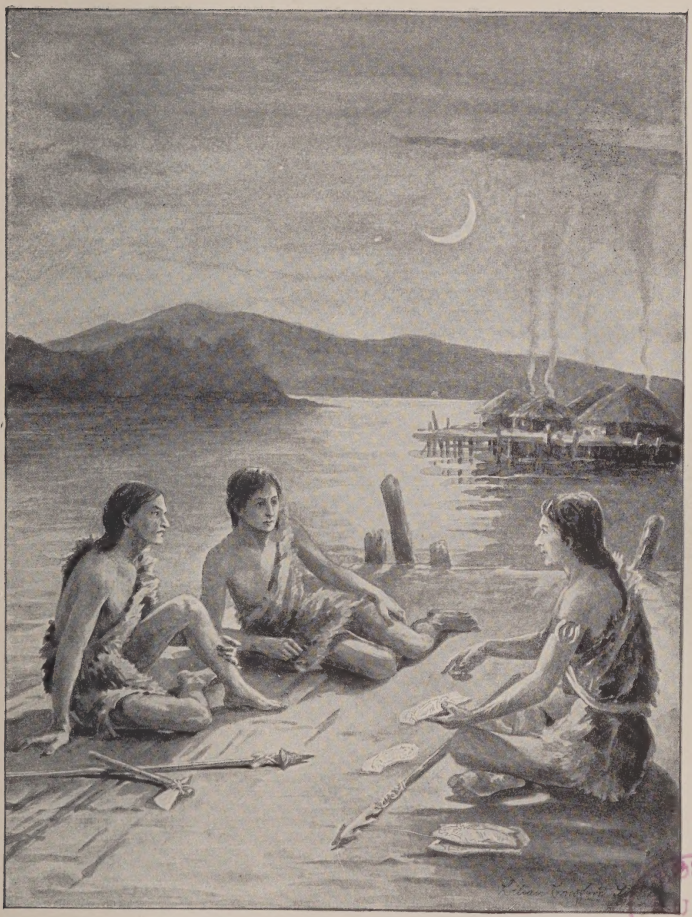
out of it a cloak fit for a warrior to wear, but she had never learned to weave. Still, when the other girls showed their best dresses to each other and chattered, and looked over their shoulder at Sptz in her deerskin mantle, some young man with a bracelet on his arm would be quite likely to pass by them and go straight to Sptz with strings of white and pearly beads in his hand — beads made from the shells which he had found in lake and river — and ask her to make for him a warrior's cloak. Such beads were not found every day. To have as many as a dozen strings around one's neck, and all one's sleeves trimmed with them, and enough left to weave in and out of one's glossy black hair, and to make a broad, tinkling band around each ankle — why, Sptz was a rich girl! and best of all, it was all her own earning. No one gave it to her for nothing. Her own ten fingers and round arms had won those jewels.

By-and-by some chief as wise as Umpl and as great would come from a far-off village, with the teeth of the Cave Bear on his arm, and the feather of the eagle in his hair; by his side would hang a sword of ruddy copper; in his hand would be a spear tufted with finest fur. The green branches of peace would be waved, and he

would pass in peace along the plank-way from the shore; but while he talked with Umpl and the other chiefs at the council his eyes, like a wise man's, would be roving hither and yonder, learning much about this new village and its people. And there, as she would be standing modestly behind the village girls, yet a full head taller than any of them, and straight as a young pine, with the sunlight flashing on her necklaces, there he would see — Sptz.

What was to happen next she would not say, even to herself. But she worked very hard at her deerskins, and always had one in hand, pricking little holes in it in odd and fashionable patterns, into which she could rub berry-stain. Sometimes she ornamented them with pictures of animals, queerly drawn, which were thought very fine. But here Umpl could beat her.

Umpl could take a great bone, and with a sharp flint and a copper knife which had been hammered until it was almost as hard as flint, he could carve on that white bone a picture of a fierce wild bull, so naturally that you would want to run away if he had not also carved a young warrior rushing down all ready to do battle with the beast. Every animal that Umpl had ever



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killed in the forest he had pictured out on the hardest and whitest bones he could find. They were his picture books, and he could take one in hand, perhaps a sketch of the great hairy elephant which we call the mammoth, and show it around the circle and then tell the story of that hunt. And they would look at the picture a moment and shut their eyes and seem to see it all just as it happened. Some of those carved pictures have lasted until this day, for I myself have seen them!

But after a time things became altogether too peaceful. They began to want something exciting — they could not go to the theatre, for there never had been such a thing. Just ordinary, plain hunting was not enough — it was too tame. There wasn't enough danger in it, and any boy will understand at once what I mean by that.

More than half of the good things of life owe their goodness to the very fact that danger attends them in some form, — danger of being "caught," of being "it," of being "put out" by some one on the other side; and the fun all comes from the being able, by your own quick foot, or eye, or thought, to win the game. The more you play that game the better you can play

it, and when it gets too easy then you feel that it is tame, and you want something harder to win than the prize of such baby-play. We all feel this in one way or another. We always have, since long before the days of Umpl. And it is just because of this that we now know more and can do more than Umpl did or could.

But in Umpl's day there was only one thing more dangerous than the hunt for the Cave Bear. There was but one game which made a young man think, and plan, and contrive as never before to come out ahead. There was but one which brought him so much honour when he won, or which cost so much when he lost, and which he thought was for that reason so well worth playing, and that game was — the hunt for the Cave Man.

Very cunning was he. His club was heavy, his flint-edged spear was sharp. The young man who went hunting for him without first studying hard and learning from his elders as much as they could tell him was more than likely never to come back at all. Perhaps for that very reason there were not so many lads in those days as there are now who think that they "know it all" without study.

But Umpl did really know it all, for the very

good reason that he had been a Cave boy himself not so very long before. So when he went out from that village at the head of his men one fine day, while the sun was shining brightly and the birds were singing, he did not neglect a single one of the many things which he had been told would bring good luck to his hunting. Every arrow was as perfect as it could be made, from feather to point. Every head of flint or bone had been tested to make sure that it was firm. Each young man had his own little sack full of bread ready baked, so that no fire by its smoke need betray them; while as to the danger because they had no fire — why, that was a part of the game. Lastly — but in Umpl's eyes the most important of all — they carried, as of old, in a sling, the Iron Star. Surely this was not the time to leave that good-luck-bringer at home, so Umpl reasoned. Thus the Star once more set out upon its travels.

Now, the errand which one goes on sometimes has a great deal to do with what he finds at the end of it. I don't mean to say that the Star had anything to do with it at all, or that it knew right from wrong. But this is certain; on its last journey Umpl was seeking only a home where he and Sptz might live and find food in a

time of famine. But now he was seeking to harm people who had never even heard of him; and if bad fortune befell, the errand itself was not good enough to deserve a better.

A wise man long afterward once wrote down the words of Jesus, "They who live by the sword shall perish by the sword," and it is a good saying. Thus it happened, that, after a wild hunt through the silent forests to the northwest for many weeks, one day they found a village which was all too strong for them. It was like arousing a hornet's nest. Umpl got out of it safely enough, with an arrow hole or two here and there where they did not count. But he did not have so many to lead back home again; and the Iron Star, alas! was lost, captured by the enemy. Umpl never laid eyes on it again.

Neither did Umpl's son. But the son of Umpl's son knew all about it, as far as any one person knew; for in the long nights when the water rippled lazily up against the mossy logs beneath the huts, and the evening smoke curled upward from the after-supper fires, then was the time for stories of great marvels in the days of old; and Umpleton, as the boy was called, knew well that far in the northwest was the Star that once had made the fortune of his family. So,

when he in his turn was partly grown up, he packed up a sack full of cakes, as his grandfather had done, took another full of beautiful bronze knives and trinkets which he himself had made, and the Star-club, which Umpl had never lost. With these he started off on a trading expedition. Times were better now than in the old days, and traders were more plenty.

For many weary weeks he wandered. Weeks ran into months, months became years, and still Umpleton wandered from village to village, from tribe to tribe, trading, keeping his eyes open, and asking questions from the old men. He learned many things from them, and although it was long before the days of books, yet by remembering what he heard and thinking it over he became for the time a young man whose word was worth listening to and whose opinion was worth having.

So, one evening he stopped at a chief's hut where he was known, and decided a very knotty question so wisely and justly that they asked him to tarry with them for a while. He answered them in a dreamy way, for his mind was thinking of the Star and his fruitless quest, forgetting that even thus it had brought good fortune, since it had given him knowledge.

They asked him how he made his bronze, and he showed them how. Then they in turn showed him certain small, very heavy black stones, which they used to make hot in the fire, and by placing in their pots would make the water in them boil furiously without danger of breaking the pot, as the fire was apt to do. As he looked at them it seemed to him that they were not unlike his Star-club, and, liking to try things, he raked a hot one out of the fire and began to hammer it with his club. He found he could hammer it like copper as long as it was hot, and he knew he had made a great find!

While the chief looked on in amazement, he found that by heating one he could flatten it out, then he could make small ones stick to it while hot and hammer all into one mass, then into a bar, and from that he could make an axe-head with an edge which would cut clean through a copper ring as though it was but cheese; next, when he was in a hurry to cool it off, and for that reason put it into water, he found that the metal became so hard that he had no tool which could scratch it, no bronze which it would not cut sheer through; and in all the Forestland no chief was so happy as the headman of that village! Axes that would cut wood as never axe

cut before! Weapons which would not break nor grow blunt at the first blow! What treasures!

Every fragment of those heavy stones was brought to Umpleton. They dug deep into the hillside for them. They made so many tools that although both stone, copper and bronze ones were still in use yet they were used only by those who could not afford the better ones. And in some such way began what we now call the Iron Age; and at last, one joyous day, two young boys found a mass of metal so heavy that they could not lift it; and by the carvings on it Umpleton found that it was indeed the treasure of his family for which he had searched so long, and the search for which had been the cause of his present fortune. Once more the Iron Star was in the hut of the son of a Cave Man.

SPARK IV.

HOW THE STAR WENT TO THE NORTHLAND.

The Iron Age! What a ringing, resonant sound, stern and grim! There is nothing in it of the dull "tunk" of stone, or the blither "clink" of copper. Instead it seems to call to mind the clang of hammers on helmet or anvil, or shield or tool, according to whether it is a time of war or peace — and in the Iron Age there was indeed very little of peace that did not look a great deal more like war.

In the Forest, many times as far from the land where Umpl lived as one could see from the tallest tree top, there lived a boy — a chief's son. His name was Ulf, the son of Urgan, who was the son of Umpleton, who, as you will remember, was the grandson of Umpl. It was thus a very long time after Umpl's day; and yet, here is a very curious thing: Umpl had blue eyes and black eyebrows and hair; so had Ulf! Umpl had a nose with a little rise in the bridge of it, like a curve; so had Ulf! Umpl's ears had

been of a longer, narrower pattern than those of his mates; Ulf had the same style of narrow ear on each side of his head; and just as Umpl thought, and dreamed a little, and planned, and looked far ahead to what he might do as the leader of a band of warriors if he could bring them to reason, instead of shooting them all with his bow and arrows when the wolves had them treed, — so now in their games Ulf was the one who did the planning. He was the one who was leader in them all. And in all the village, boy though he was, except his father, or grandfather Umpleton, no man could take a bit of iron, or of copper and make a better spearhead or a finer bracelet. He had his own small kit of tools, most of which he had made himself. He had in his father's hut the Iron Star, which served as his anvil and which he thought turned out better work than any other. And just as clearly as though he had read it in a book he knew the story of that Star, from the day it fell from the skies down to his own time. Father had told it to son, son to his son, and so on to Ulf's young day. That was the way in which people were taught history before the days of books.

This is not so strange. But is it not a most wonderful thing that just because Umpl, from

the falling of the Star was led to think, and make his brain stronger and wiser than his mates, the result of it should last so long that it made a leader of a boy more than a hundred years after Umpl's day? Just think of it! Let us suppose that you were to make up your mind that you would make the most of yourself; that, when a quarrel began at school, before taking sides you would think carefully over both sides, and make sure which was the right one, and then fight for it your hardest, instead of taking up the side you happened to hear about first; and because of your doing this every day, and in every case that has two sides, just suppose that a boy should live two hundred years from now, who would be your great-great-great-great-grandson; who would be as like you as one pea is like another, and who would grow up to be a great judge of the Supreme Court, or perhaps President of the United States!

And yet, this is happening right along all around us! Just to think of it every day makes me wonder, sometimes, what my thoughts yesterday will have to do with my own many-times-great-grandson a hundred years from now. Will he have reason to be glad or sorry?

But let us get back to Ulf.

Now and then in his Forest home he heard tales of a nation still farther to the northwest; a race of wonderfully strong men who, strange to say, had yellow hair and pink cheeks. They were also terrible fighters, and no one could stand against them among all the black or brown haired tribes. Just why a band of Northmen, as they were called,—some dictionary makers spell it Norsemen,—should think it worth while to go so far inland I cannot say; but a war-party did get as far as Ulf's village on a plundering expedition, perhaps hoping to find gold.

They did not find any, but they did find Ulf, who happened to be making such a hammering that he did not hear what was going on till it was too late to run; so he did the next best thing, and fought like a wolf. Now, if there was one thing that the Northmen valued more than another it was courage, and their leader was so pleased with the lad's pluck that—after he had picked one of his arrows out of his own arm and had warded off with some trouble various lightning-like jabs of a copper knife—he directed his men to "throw a noose over that young wildcat" and bring him along, together with what other treasure they might find.

Among that treasure was the Iron Star. Not

that they knew its story, but because they knew iron when they saw it, and what iron was good for. So that is how Ulf and the Star together first saw the sea shining in the sun as it lapped in and around the black ledges of a Norway fjord, as the inlets of that rocky land are called. But it was a weary journey thither.

What a strange sight was the glistening sea to Ulf, a son of the Forest! During the long march he had learned much of the language of his captors — it was somewhat like his own; so, when the leader turned on the brow of a hill and cried in a thundering cheer, "The vik! the vik!" he knew that the rockbound harbour and the end of the journey were in sight. What a harbour really was he had no idea. When the men raced up the hill he ran too, till the sight struck him dumb.

What was that broad, gleaming, heaving plain? Whoever saw earth toss up and down like that? What was that great animal creeping across it, borne onward by so many legs, to where others lay silent on the narrow strip of beach? The time came when he knew better what a longship was, and the difference between legs and oars. But now — what huge houses those were to one who had always lived in a

hut! Could it be possible that one could climb up inside and find a room up above the top of another room? Ulf had never seen a stairway or a ladder in his life. And what were those creatures with shining yellow and white things in their own yellow hair, clad in robes of many colours, and some of them so very, very beautiful? He had not felt fear when he fought with the Jarl — the leader. He was afraid now, for these might be spirits!

Meanwhile, the "spirits" took a very lively interest in the slender, black-haired little thrall, as slaves were called. They were in the habit of saying what they thought in those days, and it was quite a matter of course when little Edith Fairhair declared that he was "ex–ceed–ing–ly good-looking," and that she meant to ask her father to give him to her to play with. As her father happened to be the Jarl himself, of course she got what she wanted. So Ulf came to live in Jarl Sigurd's household. It was a very great change from Forest-life, and he was just the boy to make good use of it.

For one thing, his old life had taught him how to keep his eyes and ears open and his mouth shut. Few around him knew how many, many things he thought about, in that silent black

head of his. When the white-headed old man with the harp came in a great longship, with the train of a visiting jarl, and sang songs that never came to an end, songs about mighty men of other days, their wars and battles, he listened right well from his place far down the long hall where the thralls sat at suppertime.

Not one of those sagas, as they were called, did he miss. When he by daytime watched the sheep he thought of them, and told them over to himself. Thus he learned of other lands. He learned of Thor, and Odin, and the other gods which the Jarl worshipped with all his men, since they had never heard of the one true God, our Father of all. And he knew the Jarl believed that if a man was brave, and honest, and told the truth and lived a life pleasing to the gods, that pleasant things would happen to him after death. This was a much better thing to believe than to think that death was the end of everything, as they thought in the Forestland in those days. So he liked the sagas.

But Ulf the Silent was not always as silent as his name would imply. One night after supper, when the cattle had been fed, the chores were done, and the boys and girls were skipping stones on the beach together, the largest boy,

Thorold, had proved that he could throw a stone the furthest, but grew quite angry because he could not make one skip along the water as many times as Ulf. He said many things that were not nice to hear, and finally cried,

"I am a freeman's son and thou art only a thrall. And I am the stronger," shaking his fist in the other's face.

"So is an ox," said Ulf, quietly, and Edith Fairhair cried out "Good!" Ulf was her thrall, and she did not like Thorold, anyway. He was too rough because he was strong, and too stupid. Then said Ulf,

"If Sigurd was Jarl only because he is strong, Thorolf would be Jarl in his stead."

Now, Thorold was the son of Thorolf, and this was more than he could stand. He sprang at Ulf without another word. But that son of the Forest had not been called a wildcat by Sigurd without reason, and when they came to the ground together it was he who was on top, and he stayed there, too, till some men came along and picked him off. Things looked black for Ulf just then.

However, it might have been worse. Thorold was not much hurt, except in his pride, and Edith Fairhair insisted that before Ulf was flogged the

matter should be judged by the Jarl himself, which was perfectly proper, since Ulf belonged to his household. Thus Ulf found himself brought into the hall, the steps echoing among the rafters overhead, and along past rows of shields and spears that hung upon the wall, to where the Jarl sat at the further end, on the "highseat" as it was called. The saga-singer sat there on the low platform, and on the high-seat itself also rested the Jarl's other visitor, and through the window the rays of the setting sun glinted like flame on the helmets which each chief wore, and on the golden bosses and buckles of their armour.

Jarl Sigurd was not particularly surprised at a claim for justice, but he was surprised to see among the witnesses his own daughter, standing modestly apart lest the stranger should think ill of her, yet with her father's own calm, proud look in her eye. Then he saw Ulf, and began to understand.

The trial was brief enough, for every one told the truth, even Thorold. The Jarl heard them patiently, to the last one, then politely asked the opinion of the other chief. Now the guest, Jarl Swend, knew perfectly well that of all the sailors in longships along that land not one was more

long-headed, more perfect in the art of war or in making other leaders at a council believe his was the better way, than was the man who sat by his side. So he looked at Ulf and laughed a little; then he said,

"If this black-haired thrall is guilty of aught then am I, for I too say, 'If Sigurd was Jarl only because of his strength,' another than he might lead us in battle. Every man has two strong arms. So strong arms are many, but wise heads are few."

Now this was a good word, and Sigurd was well pleased, as indeed he ought to have been, for it was a great compliment to himself. But it seemed to him that it would be well for him to say next a word which might show that he was worthy of such praise. So, after he had thought a while, he said,

"Ulf goes free. He has done no wrong. Thorold should learn that a warrior who does not think as well as strike is good only for rowing. Now, this is my word to thee and to all my small people. Jarl Swend well says that strong arms are plenty, but heads to plan are few. Let us raise up more good heads. Twelve moons from now I will call you together. On that day the boy who brings to me the most wonderful

thing which he has made with his own hands, planned out by himself, shall receive a prize worthy of a jarl's giving."

He paused, and looked thoughtfully at Edith Fairhair's eager face. Then he said,

"If the girls wish to try it like their brothers, they too shall have a prize of their own to win. And those who do not win it will yet be none the worse for trying."

Then Jarl Swend laughed as he looked at Sigurd, and said,

"Truly, it is not for nothing that men call thee Sigurd the Wise; now I see why the young men who sail their longships from your vik are luckier than other men." And Sigurd was satisfied.

But when all the other lads had gone, and the sunset flush had faded into grey, Ulf lingered, then went up to the highseat, and said, boldly,

"Jarl Sigurd, thrall am I, yet a chief's son also. Is the offer open to me?"

Sigurd looked at a scar on his arm and laughed. Then he nodded kindly, and said,

"Thrall thou art, and a chief's son also. Win thou the prize and thrall art thou no longer."

Then Ulf took a long, long look at the Jarl, a look which somehow included Edith Fairhair also, and went away.

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SPARK V.

HOW THE STAR FLEW INTO MANY PIECES, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

WHAT a glorious thing it is to be young and full of life! Ulf went out of the long hall so delighted that he hardly knew whether his feet did not have wings; and he went straight to the shore of the vik, climbed up into one of the long-ships, made his way to the lofty prow and sat down to think it over. That prow curved upward and over like a great swan's neck, with a dragon's head carved on the end, and he noted with curious eyes how here and there could be seen a splintered scar and in it perhaps still the arrow-head that made it. He dug one out and looked at it, with a sniff of contempt. He knew he could make a better one himself. He did not know that that arrow-head was made in a far-away island, called Britain, where traders went to buy tin. British arrow-heads have been great travellers.

The sight of the weapon, however, and the

hole it had made gave Ulf just the tail-end of an idea! He began to think, oh, so hard!—to think and to plan.

Up in a sheltered corner lay the Iron Star, just where it first had been flung down by its weary-armed bearers on the day when it reached the vik. Ulf's first free act had been to arrange a few bits of bark over it to keep it from the weather; and, being out of sight, of course it was forgotten. But Ulf remembered! That Star had always been the good fortune of his family. Could it not help him now? So he sat and planned, till the grey gulls ceased their restless circling over the waters of the fjord and went to rest. But while he thought his hardest, still through it all he seemed to hear, like a golden hum woven in and out of the fabric of his dream-song of freedom, the voice of Edith Fairhair.

Of course the young folks of the vik were all in a thrill of excitement. Such planning, and telling of plans, and not a little boasting! But Ulf the Silent watched the sheep and kept apart. One night, however, when the men were leaping, wrestling and trying other feats, Thorolf the Strong had beaten many, when Ulf suddenly said,

"One thing, Thorolf, I would like to see done.

Under yonder bark lies a black stone. I do not think the man lives who can break it with one blow of a hammer."

This he said craftily, for he did not know just what spirit might be angered by the blow, and if evil came of it, it was better that it came to the captor than the captive.

"Behold the man now!" said Thorolf, loudly, and kicked away the bark, then looked foolish as he saw the Star, while all the men around sat down and laughed. But Thorolf brought a hammer and struck a great blow. Sparks flew, and that was all, except that Ulf caught his breath and winked. He really could not help it that first time, and felt very much ashamed. Fortunately, every one was laughing at Thorolf and did not see him. That strong man tried again, with as little result, and all laughed harder, even Jarl Sigurd.

This was more than Thorolf could stand. Rushing to a smithy he brought back the largest hammer in it, swung it twice round his head, then brought it down with a crash on one of the many lumps that studded the Star; and this time he broke it clean off. Again and again he struck, furiously angry, breaking off lump after lump, and when the laughter became

cheers he flung down the mallet and was well pleased when the Jarl said,

"By the Hammer of Thor! Thorolf the Strong is well named!"

But Ulf was still more pleased; and when all had gone away he stored in a safe place all the bits of the Star which had been broken off — to tell the truth, when Thorolf ended little was left of it but bits.

From that time on, Ulf spent all his spare time in the smithy. It was not regularly in use at that period, and few cared to ask what he was doing. Now and then a boy looked in, but all he saw was that Ulf was forging the bits of iron into slender spindles and had a heap already done. Such spindles made good fish-hooks, when bent and pointed, and they were well content when he gave them one or two. Much of his time while sheep-watching he was busy also; and one day Edith Fairhair found he had not forgotten her. She came running to the Jarl to show him a great treasure.

Sigurd looked it over curiously. It was the long shankbone of an ox, polished till it was as white as ivory, and carved in quaint patterns. Then on one side two figures were scratched in quite skilfully; one evidently a captive holding

out chained hands, the other a girl holding up a knife. On the other side were the same figures, but the chain had been cut in two. Something rattled within the bone, and taking out a pretty stopper the Jarl let fall in his lap five slender, shining rods of steel, so beautifully round and smooth and glistening that he cried,

"Well done, Ulf! When the year is ended I think none other will surpass this."

And, indeed, in all the village round the vik there was not another such a set of knitting needles.

But Ulf the Silent looked fearlessly up at Sigurd and said,

"Needles are women's tools. The son of a chief is worth a greater price than that."

And Jarl Sigurd as he looked at him could think of nothing but of how in his own young days he had caught a baby falcon, and of the scratchy time he had in taming it. Yet, when he had taught it to love him in its own fierce fashion, not one of his other good things pleased him so well as his hawk. Perhaps here was another hawk as well worth training.

As for Edith, she hugged her new gift over and over again; she was as delighted a girl as ever stood on one foot because she was too happy

to stand on two, and finally off she rushed to show her treasure to her mother.

She had dreams of prizes, too! Out in the flock there was a white sheep which she called hers, since she had brought it up as a lamb when its mother would not own it, as is sometimes the way with sheep — silly things! It was shearing-time now and she wanted that wool.

Sheep-shearing is not an easy thing for a girl to do. But she got Ulf to wash the animal under a near-by water-fall, and to tie its feet, and after about a day of it she sheared it quite nicely; but it would be hard to say whether the sheep or Edith was the more weary of it when the task was done. She could say how she felt, and spoke her small mind about it with great freedom. As for the sheep, it gave a bleat, a skip, and went off with a great tail-wagging, and would not come near Edith Fairhair for a week, which is a long time for a sheep to remember.

Meanwhile, Edith had the wool.

What a snowy, fleecy pile it made, to be sure! And what fun it was to take up a handful of it, roll it into a string between her fingers, then twist one end of it around a spindle which she would throw out in the air with a twirl that would make it spin. Of course this would twist

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the wool into a thread, fine or large, according to whether the spindle was twirled strongly or not.

All the ladies that Edith Fairhair ever saw had just such spindles and used them, too. Her mother had one of pure gold, which had been made for a queen, and which the Jarl had brought from a far country; and in the long winter evenings, when the storm howled without, and the huge logs were piled on the fire, it was a beautiful thing to see the little flashing darts flying out from the white hands toward the darkness, each held by a white cord; and foot by foot, as the strong yarn grew in length, it would be wound for safe keeping around the little cross on the large end of the spindle until it would quite hide it from sight. Then a slender stick would be bent up like a "U" and tied so; and the yarn would be wound around the two arms in long loops, all ready to be dipped in dye to colour it. If any one wanted still finer thread, they could take this yarn and spin it still more, and with stronger fingers.

Edith Fairhair's spindle was made out of a bit of that wonderful Star. Ulf made it, and gave it to her in his silent, boyish way. Many and many a yard of warm, thick yarn she had spun with it before the early winter came. Then

came out the precious knitting needles; and really it seemed as though there was magic in them, so all the women said. The yarn slipped along them so smoothly, never catching and only now and then dropping stitches! Altogether, it was a very happy winter, and a very busy one for Edith Fairhair; and if her mother helped her now and then over the hard places, what then? Is not that what mothers are for, and what they love to do? Still, the most of the great work Edith did herself. She only asked to be shown how, and very contentedly did the rest.

Then, winter was the time for weaving. This Edith could not do, as yet. She was not quite strong enough. One had to sit in a frame that had a row of threads stretched across it, with another row running the same way but so fastened that at one end they could be either raised up above the level of the first row or dropped beneath it. Sitting at the tied end her mother would throw a little wooden boat skimming between the two sets of threads, from one side to the other, the boat being laden with a spool of yarn and dragging a thread behind it. When the boat reached the other side, the thread would be drawn tight. Then with the foot in a strap the loose bar would be drawn down, taking one

set of threads with it, and there would be the boat's thread caught as in a trap. Then the boat would come flashing back on its return voyage, up would go the bar again, and that thread would be fast, too, just as the other was; and so the cloth would grow, by just the width of the boat-thread, with each trip.

It was slow work, to be sure; but then, one had plenty of time. Then, too, it was such pretty work! One could have several little boats, each laden with a differently coloured thread. By using two at a time, going opposite ways, the cloth would have a "pepper-and-salt" mixture of colour, as we call it now; or by using one for a time and then the other, it would make broad stripes of colour, which was thought very fine. Yet, after all, Edith Fairhair thought nothing could be prettier than pure white — if only it was kept white. But, white or coloured, she never tired watching the flying shuttles, as we call the little boats to-day.

Meanwhile, all through the winter, merrily rang the smithy with clink of hammer on heated steel. After that gift to Edith the Jarl told Ulf he might take all the time he needed for his freedom-work; and he took it. Pounds of steel needles had been made and stored away. He

had tried to remember all he ever heard about how to temper them, and he already had learned to watch the glowing steel slowly change its colour from dazzling white as it cooled to rose red, and at just the right moment to plunge it into water. But he only tried it on one or two bits, as yet, just to make sure he was right; and these utterly astonished him by their hardness. No iron that he had ever seen was like it. Of course he laid it all to the magic of the Star, as many a warrior did in after years, not knowing that in that kind of iron there is often a small mixture of nickel, such as our five-cent piece is made of, and that steel made from such a mixture is harder and tougher than any other kind. Bicycle-makers have found this out for themselves, and know the reason of the toughness, but it was a great mystery to Ulf.

It made him very happy, however; and blithely clinked his small hammer as he worked away, weaving a strange kind of cloth that was not made of soft wool, nor was it woven in a loom with flashing shuttle. Instead, inch by inch of it, as it grew, was thrust into the glowing coals and heated; first in the shape of slender steel needles, which were cut off and twisted into tiny rings, dozens of them; then these were

hooked into each other, ring into ring, and hammered while still hot till each was solid, and as though it had never been straight in its life or anything else but a ring, without beginning or end. Then came the great thing — the tempering. How anxiously he watched it! How carefully he blew the fire as the strip of iron cloth lay in the coals! Then what a hissing it made and what a shout of triumph Ulf gave when at last the perfect temper was reached and the strip was bubbling the water! Many such strips lay piled in a dry place before spring came, and with it the time for joining them all together.

It was a great day for the young folks of the vik when the contest was to be decided. Half-a-dozen longships of other jarls happened to be in port at the time and Jarl Sigurd was not sorry to let his visitors see what his young people could do. Wonderfully well made were many of the trials. One boy showed a bow of two great horns joined together, which only Thorolf the Strong could bend. Another showed an ox-horn, with the tip cut off and ornamented, and the whole horn carved in spiral grooves; and raising it to his lips he blew a blast that could be heard a mile! There seemed to be as many different things as there were boys and girls to

make them; and Jarl Sigurd was pleased indeed when the other jarls with one voice said that among the works of the girls the finest and most useful of all was a snow-white garment like a knitted jersey, made from the sheep's wool by Edith Fairhair. How her cheeks glowed bright red, and how bright her eyes shone, when she had to wear it before them and say who made it! What was the value of the prize compared with the look her father gave her! yet, those bracelets were of pure gold, and came from far across the seas.

"But where is Ulf?" said Sigurd, suddenly. "The lad is proud, and I hope he has not failed."

"My thrall does not fail in what he tries to do!" said Edith, and the jarls all laughed, save Sigurd, who shook his head with smiling reproof, saying,

"The thrall waits till after the freeman, and that is well. Now, some one call him."

Then Ulf the Silent stepped forward from behind the throng, and laid before the jarls a package that was carefully wrapped in deerskin. It gave a soft, musical tinkle as he laid it down and vanished in the throng again. With laughter Jarl Sigurd stooped forward, saying,

"The lad was braver when he sent an arrow

through my arm than he is to-day," and untied the package. "It is not light, jarls. What!—by Thor and Odin, and all the gods of Valhalla! when did man ever see the like?"

Oh, what a rare sight it was!—thousands of tiny rings of steel, cunningly woven together by the hand of one whose father and whose father's father had worked in metal, and who had taught him all they knew! The light rippled across the folds in flashes like molten silver; the loose links along the edges rang like fairy bells, and not one jarl in all his travels had ever seen a more beautiful shirt of mail. A king of kings might be proud to wear it. Yet it was made by Jarl Sigurd's thrall!

"No! by Tyr, thrall is he no longer! Stand forward, Ulf. Choose thou; wilt go back to the Forest? If so, I will send thee with a guard of honour. Wilt stay in my household? Then thou art as my son, and in days to come a longship will I give thee to command."

Then Ulf the Silent, with a sidelong look at Edith Fairhair, said, "I thank thee, Jarl; at the vik I choose to stay." And great was the laughter and applause.

But when the strangers had sailed away, Jarl Sigurd brought out that shirt of mail and tried

it on, but found it all too small for him, and said,

"Thou crafty one! Tell me, didst make this small that thou mayst the younger hope to wear it?"

Then Ulf broke silence, and told the wondering Jarl the story of the Star, as far as he knew it, and how, as a family matter, it appeared to be better that Ulf alone should own the mail; to which the Jarl shudderingly agreed, for, brave though he was, he feared witchcraft. Then Ulf set the mail on a post and bade Thorolf the Strong send a spear through it if he could.

Scornfully the giant hurled a javelin at the mark, and gasped as it fell shivered like glass at the foot of the post. On the armour, not a scar!

"It is dwarf-worked; elves did it!" he cried. And for a like reason many a sword and suit of armour has been thought to be made by magic by men who did not know of nickel steel.

But not all of the Star was used in that suit of armour. Some of it Ulf kept for sword and battle-axe. Some of it went to gentler uses, and some of it in the shape of harpstrings in other days sang a song of liberty to a captive king. But no braver sight the vik ever saw than the one when out through the black wolf's-mouth of

massive cliffs one morning a swift longship sped, with the early wind rounding the great sail and helping the rowers with their oars. A line of shields hung along each side, helmeted heads gleamed here and there, and high in the stern the rising sun made a form shine like a statue of silver flame as he waved farewell to those on shore, who cheerily waved and shouted farewells back again. Jarl Sigurd was now too old to take the seas; and Edith Fairhair — was still Edith Fairhair. Ulf the Silent had still his fame to win. But she knew that he would win it.

SPARK VI.

HOW FRAGMENTS OF THE STAR TRAVELLED TO A FAR COUNTRY.

Ulf still had a name to win; but what a glorious thing it was to stand there in the stern of that swift craft and feel it quiver with life beneath him in response to the rhythmic stroke of the oarsmen, as it surged through the heaving water. Brightly the sunlight leaped along the sea. Snow-white was the foam that flashed upward underneath the curving prow, and now and then jetted high enough to come hissing inboard on the wind when the fitful gusts shifted to the rightabout. The men laughed, and carelessly shook the drops from their broad backs when it splashed among them.

What a hardy set of men they were, those Northmen of old! They had no compass; they must steer by the sun, or by the stars, guess at their rate of sailing and tell by that how many more days distant was their destination. If the weather was fine, well. But if the sky clouded over, and sun nor star was seen for a week or

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more, while the wind veered at its own will, the chances were more than even that they would bring up on some coast where they had never been, with water and food to get, and perhaps every headland bristling with hostile spears. All this they knew, yet out to sea they went as happily as a fisherman seeks his nets. Trading, starving, fighting, plundering, — it was all one to them. On the whole, they seemed to like fighting the best of all, since that is what their sagas told most about.

But Ulf was not by birth a Northman. Yet a rover by nature was he, and chief of all things that he most desired was to explore strange lands, and especially what lay beyond where the sky dipped downward and seemed to meet the sea. Ships came from thence, now and then; ships had gone thence, as he knew, and some had never come back, but perhaps were sailing still from land to land, through the great unknown.

For weeks his ship sailed onward, over a lonely ocean. Now and then the misty fountain sprung upward from the waves where a whale was "blowing," with gulls hovering in the air above his glistening black back. There were more gulls then than now, and more whales also, and often the men would finger their lances wistfully and look

with inquiring eyes at their youthful captain. At another time they would not have looked in vain; indeed, in after days Ulf became somewhat famous even among the men of the fjords for the number of whales he brought in. But now his soul was elsewhere. Even the problem of getting back did not trouble him in the least.

Yet it was one thing to start out a-voyaging, sure of bringing up somewhere if you only went far enough. It is quite another thing to be equally sure of finding the way homeward over the trackless sea, without a landmark from horizon to horizon to steer by for weeks and weeks. What seems a sixth sense is given to some of us — the sense of "direction," which the passenger pigeon has and which enables it to fly straight back to its nest, though set free hundreds of miles from home. When of old a young man had that faculty, the chances were that he would become a famous pilot; and sometimes he might be charged with witchcraft as a penalty for knowing too much! Ulf, a son of the trackless Forest, had that sixth sense.

One morning the dawn-light revealed a black spot on the low horizon. A speck that grew larger, with twinkling, fin-like flashes along each side, and in due time it proved to be a galley

like their own bearing down straight for them. Nobody stopped to ask any questions. That was not sea-style then. But just as naturally as two men now in a lonely journey would shake hands on meeting, these two captains slipped their arms through their shield-handles, sheered alongside just beyond oar-tip, and exchanged cards in the shape of a couple of whistling javelins.

Up from their benches sprang the rowers. Twang! sung their war-bows the song of the cord, and the air was full of hissing whispers of Death as their shafts hurtled past. Round and round the two galleys circled in a strange dance, each steersman striving to bring his craft bows on, so as to ram and crush the other, while they lurched in the cross-seas, and rolled till they dipped in tons of water over the rail.

Up sprang the stranger on his prow; tall and broad-shouldered was he, with a torrent of ruddy hair floating in the wind. As Ulf turned to give an order to bale out the inrushing water, up rose a brawny arm, and a great spear flashed down from the high bow of the enemy and struck fairly between his shoulders. So sharp was the blow, so sudden, that Ulf pitched forward on one knee for just half a breath. But the spear fell

clanging to the deck. The ruddy warrior stood looking at it with eyes of amazement. His own spear, that never before had failed! A flash of light leaped back like a lightning stroke; back to its master whistled the brand, for, ere he rose, Ulf snatched it up and as he rose he hurled it — straight through the unguarded arm of the stranger.

"Hold!"

The shout rang sternly across the water and echoed back and forth from sail to sail. The shouting hushed. Only the creak of the swaying yard, the hoarse swash of the water, the panting of deep breathing broke the silence, then once more from the lofty prow came the commanding voice.

"Who and whence art thou?"

"A son of the Forest am I," answered the other. "Ulf is my name, Ulf the Silent my title, Jarl Sigurd my father by adoption. The sea is my home; from over sea I came, and over sea am I going."

"What dwarfs made that armour?" demanded the other, holding a cloth to his wounded limb.

"Ten dwarfs welded it, ten dwarfs tempered it, and the same ten guard the wearer. Thou best shouldst know what five of them can do," and

Ulf smiled grimly as he held up his hand with outspread fingers.

"Now it is thy turn. Who art thou?"

"Leif is my name," said the other, "and Eric the Red is my father. To the West have I been sailing, searching for a land with lumber for ship-building. Now am I homebound. Come thou with me and thou shalt be as my brother; for a good spearman art thou as ever sailed the seas; and afterward we will sail together."

"I like it well," said Ulf, frankly, "and homeward will I go with thee"—for that was sea-politeness then. So they set a new course by the stars that night and before Leif's arm had ceased to tingle they saw the black walls of rock that guarded the entrance to his haven.

Many a night in after years Ulf lay awake and watched the stars, thinking the while of his visit to Greenland and of all that came of it. A mighty man of his hands was Leif. In sheer strength no two in both ships were his match in a close wrestle. None could strike a keener blow. Yet was he hugely delighted when, one afternoon in friendly fray, Ulf again and again slipped within his guard and with a lithe writhe of his slender form twined a bear's hug around his bulky friend and dashed him earthward.

And to give Ulf one spear's length advantage in a hot scurry across country was never to come up with him again.

"Thou art the man of men I long have hunted for!" Leif cried. "Let your ship rest for a season; — or, better, let your longest-headed seaman captain it for a voyage, trading, and come thou with me. Far to the southward and westward lie rich timber lands. Where, we know not, yet storm-driven ships have seen them. These I mean to find, and for such a distant quest one ship is better than two."

So sunnily looked down the great man at the slighter one, so joyous at the thought of that voyage into the mists of the southern seas that Ulf — rover to the marrow — held out his hand in silence, and the compact was made.

It did not take long to provision the craft, or to arrange other matters. Soon they were surging once more across apparently boundless seas. Three times they came to lands unknown to them, yet not the country of great trees talked of by old sailors around the winter fires. At last it loomed up in reality above the horizon, covered with timber enough to build a great city, — more than ever was seen close at hand by Northmen before. And right lustily swung the axes among

them for days and weeks, until even the keenest trader among them all was contented with his share of wealth that was to come to him when once back in Greenland. There were not lacking signs, either, that savage neighbours might be unpleasant neighbours, as more than one stone-headed arrow had whistled past, heralded by the first war-whoop that ever was heard by ears of white men.

So, like a careful captain, Leif got his dried fish, his smoked deer-meat, his water casks, and his lumber by degrees all on board; he lit the watchfires as usual at sundown; but by moonrise, with the early tide he and his men slipped quietly out of their stockaded camp and into their vessel, and silently drifted out to sea before the warm land-wind that still was faintly blowing. And late that night a savage war party called at the camp with spear and torch, to find it only an empty shell, to their huge disappointment.

Other captains, less wise, came after Leif in their timber-hunting, and not all came safely home again. Perhaps the good fortune that still followed the guardian of the Iron Star had something to do with Leif and Ulf's fair voyaging in this, the first time that a part of the Star ever came to the shores of America. If so, then

indeed its power must have lived long after Ulf had said farewell and swept onward in his own ship toward Norway once again; for by all his friends the tall captain was called "Leif the Lucky."

And even now, in the entrance to a beautiful park in a great city of that land where he went timber-cutting a thousand years before that city — Boston — was ever heard of, there, high in air, as though still standing on the prow of his ship, looms up a brave figure in bronze. A closeknit, flexible shirt of mail guards his form. One hand rests upon his hip, holding his curved war-horn. The other shades the eyes; — for, even in this statue of him, Leif Ericsson is still the crosser of far seas, the finder of strange lands, the sleepless watcher forever gazing from beneath his shadowed brows into the golden west.

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SPARK VII.

HOW THE STAR HELPED ULF THE SILENT TO WIN A GREAT NAME.

Back at the fjord, what happened to Edith Fairhair while Ulf was on the ocean? Apparently nothing worth recording. Yet something had happened, so silently, so stealthily that no one gave the matter a thought. What was it? Why, Edith Fairhair had grown up!

She was now a tall maiden, straight as a poplar tree. Hers was now the hand to rule in her sweet lady-mother's place when work bore heavily on the shoulders now weary with many years. She it was who now directed the household thralls and saw that their tasks were well done. Did they not understand their business? Then hers was the hand to show them how, be it spinning, weaving, milking, washing, sweeping, dusting, or any other household art.

In the kitchen it seemed to the servants that all the pots and kettles were bewitched when young Edith stood before them, for the water

never refused to boil nor the wood to burn, nor the roast to cook thoroughly and tender. And she had so deft a way of first thinking out what new things would be likely to go well together, and then mixing things that no one ever thought of mixing before, which yet turned into the most delightful dishfuls, that the sea-kings who dined with Sigurd jestingly declared that but one thing prevented some one's making war on him in hope of capturing Edith for himself, and that was the surety that if he won he then would have to fight all the others!

But one morning the sun had just begun glinting past the pines, and had turned all the dew-drops into dancing jewels, as Edith stepped to the door and flung it open to admit the fresh morning air. As it swung she found herself face to face with a browned, bright-eyed young man, clad in mail that rippled in the sunlight radiance.

"Ulf!"

"Edith!"

And down the slope were moving forms about a longship, rusty and weedy from long voyaging, now drawn up high on the beach for a long rest. In the clear air their voices were blithe as they shouted orders and tossed to earth the bales of costly furs, or handed down with more respect

some small yet valuable parcel, doubtless containing gems or gold; while over the waters of the vik the gulls were wheeling, screaming, calling, as it seemed to Edith,

"Ulf! our Ulf is home again!"

Then the sun lifted itself clear of the shadowing pines and flooded the fjord with glory, and in Edith's face he seemed to have flashed a colour of sunrise rose.

"For rest and new plans have I come," said Ulf, presently. "Seas have I crossed, and new lands have I seen, and wealth have I won while trading; but a name is not won in ways like these."

To him, indeed, that name of honour still seemed as far beyond the horizon as ever it had been. Yet, for some reason, Edith thought differently. So did Jarl Sigurd when, now seated on the "high-seat" with other visiting captains, Ulf told of his search for timber lands and briefly gave an idea of what he had brought home.

"Almost thou art man-grown, Ulf," he said, significantly. "Not quite, as yet. But almost. A little more, perhaps another voyage —"

Ulf's face flushed scarlet, and into his eyes leaped a joyous light. Yet he said only,

"The son of a jarl needs a larger measure, else

will men say, 'good as a dagger, but short for a sword.'"

And the grim war-captains around, who knew the difference, nodded assent and said the word was wise. Yet thought they none the less of the youth because he felt that a renowned father made all the harder work needful in the son.

But all day long, and for various other days, the dark little smithy was alight again, and merrily the clink of anvil rang. Little by little new plans were forming. A new strip of rings had to be let into that mail, for Ulf had grown larger. He had grown in other ways as well, and could see far into the needs for the future. So to his arms he had added a spearhead with a point like a needle. And now he took from an almost forgotten hiding-place a toy of his younger days.

You would hardly know the use at first glance. Just two jawbones of some large animal, white and polished. But look closer at them. The outer side of the curve has been filed flat. There are holes drilled in the bone through which are rove leather strips. If with those strips the bones were laced to the bottom of your shoes, now —

"Skates!" you cry; and skates they were. Not keen enough perhaps to give a good honest stroke, yet speedy enough when used rightly in "roller-

skate " fashion, and just as easy to get a fall with as any other kind. Ulf's nose tingled as he looked at them. It seemed to remember at least one bump.

Then Ulf fell to hammering again at his bits of steel, and presently those flat surfaces of bone were shod with something harder, with keen cutting edges of corners that would never slip, no matter how glassy the ice beneath.

Jarl Sigurd laughed when he heard of it and said that Ulf was still quite a boy. Edith was amazed, although that winter she took much pleasure in a pair of skates which were wondrous keen. But that was still in the future; meanwhile, Ulf said nothing, only smiled, and when he next sailed away he took his new toys with him.

* * * * *

Far up in the Arctic Circle, where the nights are six months long, day was fairly begun. That means, it had progressed till five or six weeks of our days might have been carved out of it, and the sun stood quite high above the horizon. It was so warm that the ice had begun to melt, and one great floe of it, ever so many miles wide, broke off from the rest and began to drift slowly southward. What made it break off was this: —

here and there in the smooth plain great icebergs were frozen, huge mountains of ice, every one of them. The wind was blowing south, and each berg stood there like a great white sail. Underneath there was a current flowing southward; and every berg was many times larger under water than it was above, as you can see for yourself by dropping a piece of ice into a waterpail and measuring the difference. So the river of water flowing through the Arctic Ocean was pushing, pushing, and the wind above was pushing, pushing, until at last there came a thunderous crack, and the whole concern began drifting, drifting down to the warmer seas.

But where did the bergs come from? That, too, is very curious. Among the mountains in the far north, just as in Switzerland, there are great rivers of ice, called glaciers. They look like rivers frozen clear to the bottom, and the weight of the ice is forever pressing it downward toward the sea, sliding, squeezing, crushing itself into strange forms, and moving a few inches or a few feet or yards per year. Very slow progress, you will say. But then, it is enough. By and by a great mass of it will be shoved so far into the sea that it will break off, a whole mountain of it, and go wallowing away with perhaps twenty cart-

loads of sand and gravel and great stones scooped up from the bottom into its crevices, or frozen fast to the ice. By-and-by that berg will drift down as far as Newfoundland, where it will meet the warm water of the Gulf Stream as it hurries northward. The ice will melt, the sand and stones will go silting downward, and by just so much the bottom of the ocean will be a little nearer to the surface. Already there are great banks of such deposits, many miles across, where a ship can anchor, although out of sight of land; and they are great places to go fishing on. More codfish and halibut are caught in such places than anywhere else.

Meanwhile the floe was drifting, — the one we started to write about. Right in the heart of it there was a round hole in the ice. A fat brown seal had made it when the ice was not so thick; and he kept it open, so that when the whole ocean was frozen he still could have a place to breathe through. There were other places now, but still he liked to come back home to this one. The snow had blown into the hole and formed a hard crust across it, which kept the colder air out; and after our seal had tired of fishing and felt air-thirsty, he would swim quickly to the place and blow warm breaths against the crust

till a little airhole was melted right through it, which was quite enough for him. Just now the seal was not at home.

Close to the snow-buried hole lay a great yellowish-white heap, too yellow to be ice, too white to be noticed as different from any other hummock of ice. For hours it had crouched there utterly motionless, save now and then the silent quiver of a small ear hidden in the fur. All day it would stay if need be, patient as death and as sure — the great white polar bear, with claws like hooks of iron, and looked at with respect by Northmen, who gave scant respect to anything else on earth.

And good was their reason, for, as they knew, "He has eleven men's wit and twelve men's strength," and of all foes to meet, none was so terrible, none so full of craft. Men tell of two hunters who saw one by a pool and stole up behind a rock. When they peered over there was no bear there, nothing but a brown leaf drifting across the pool. Then, as they looked, the leaf disappeared behind the bank, and without a sound the head of that bear slipped out of the water right there, and rose inch by inch to get a good look at the watchers. Then back it slipped again, down, down, till only the tip of the nose

was left, and once more there was nothing to be seen but what seemed a brown leaf drifting across the water.

Well the great beast on the floe knew what was to be found in good time beneath that snow crust, and his long-haired paws had made no sound when he first had crept like a shadow to the spot. Now at last the time had come. The first faint tinkle of water lapping in the hole had caught his watchful ear. Yet still he waited; waited while the breathing grew plainer as the snow grew thin; raised himself ever so slowly and rustleless, and until the first little whiff of steam burst through; then — then — down on each side plunged the resistless sets of curved daggers! down between plunged the wolf-trap mouth, and with an ease that would make one forget how heavy a seal is, this one was flirted out of his hole and sent rolling yards away, only to be pounced on a second later, with an exultant roar that echoed from berg to berg until a great fragment split off from one and crashed into splinters at its base. Then the echoes were fine indeed as they rumbled along the glittering plain.

The bear enjoyed his dinner. He had waited long for it and so perhaps deserved it. But it

was not wise of him to pay it quite such close attention, and for the moment fail to keep ears or eyes alert to other things. Even as it was, however, a sound caught his attention — an odd, hissing, whistling noise,— and he raised his long, snaky neck and head, now dyed a brilliant red, and dripping frightfully. Yes, he was not mistaken. Something was coming, and he stirred uneasily. Not that he was afraid,— of what living creature in those days was a Rider of the Berg ever afraid? — but he might have to fight for his dinner. Perhaps he remembered meeting such a creature once before and the fight that came of it. It was a good dinner that followed, but it was many days before certain wounds of his own had healed; at all events, it was well to be ready.

On came the figure as swiftly as a bird, glittering in the light like an icicle. The bear began half not to like it, and expressed his displeasure at such uncanny work by uttering a curse deep in his shaggy throat, a curse that came snarling through ivory fangs already tinged with red; but never a second paused that flying form. Long leads of ice around were glassy, and down the nearest lane among the rougher patches, hist! — swist! flashed the darting feet. And as

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the skater passed in full flight, followed by the ever-turning, wrathful, watchful, shaggy head, up went the short sea-bow, backed with whale-bone. Tsang! and swift as light an arrow, drawn to the head, had crossed the space and buried its length nearly to the feather in the mass of yellow hair.

Like an uncoiled spring round snapped the roaring head, and bit savagely at the spot where the arrow had already bitten deeper, and then with wonderful speed the furious beast stretched himself in keen pursuit. If that smooth road should come to an end! — but the skater had vanished behind a berg. Hist! — swist! Here he comes again, from round the other side, and down another lane. Another arrow glances in the sun, and again for a second a stinging wound receives a needless bite. Time lost! and time, O Bear, is of value, did you but know it. Twice already has that fierce sting bitten deeply into your joints, and both hind feet move now strangely slow, feet which used to carry you swiftly as any deer. Beware the third!

Silently came again the mail-clad skater — voiceless, save for the whistling of his flight,— and undaunted still the enraged monster rushed

to meet him, only to meet, baffled, yet another shaft in the tenderest spot in his shoulder, that gave to the severed sinew and let him drop on it so heavily that it completed the mischief done. And now for the first time in his life the polar bear felt fear. His keen wit told him that in such war he was mastered. He ceased to rush madly onward. He settled slowly on his torn haunches, and swayed this way and that on his one sound foreleg, till that too gave way and he sank in a shapeless heap.

Back came Ulf, swirling, wildly exultant, casting away bow and quiver. A slash of his knife freed his feet, and with a bound he sprang on the rough ice, axe in belt, spear in hand, on his feet small irons that would keep them from slipping. In a dozen strides he was ready for the thrust and made it. Then Ulf's brave heart stood still for one dread throb. Like the ward of a boxer up came the great white forearm, and the spear only glanced along the hair. Like the stroke of a serpent the long neck shot upward, the furious jaws crunched into the shaft, and with a sharp side-shake, snap! snap! in three pieces flew the splintered wood. Now for the throat!

It was all so awfully sudden! No time to think,

to plan, to evade! Just time to snatch from belt his keen little axe, to fling out the weaponless left hand and catch with it from below that murderous lower jaw, then, with all his own wildcat quickness and last ounce of strength, to strike!

It was a wonderful blow, men said afterward — so fairly in line between the eyes that no scale could detect a waver, yet far enough back to go crashing down helve-deep through the brain till it touched somewhere the spinal cord, the one great nerve of life that carries the brain's messages to the limbs, and without which they are dead. And Ulf, still staring into the glowing coals that gleamed in the eyesockets of his enemy, felt, rather than saw, the light flicker out like candles as the red-stained head dropped to his blow with a sinking of the whole frame about which there could be no mistake. Axe fell with head, and the handle clattered on the ice.

Yes, it was a wonderful blow; and when Ulf looked at the black, hurrying knot of his slow-footed men and down at the result, and knew in his soul what other results would follow, the blood came surging back from his heart in a mighty tide of joy. Now he was a man! Now

he was a Northman of the Northmen! Now he would have a name of his own! And over the wild waste of ice rang out the war-cry of the Northman, of the Viking, the one who made and unmade kings,

"AOI!"

SPARK VIII.

HOW THE IRON STAR VISITED A GREAT KING.

So Ulf came home again to his reward with more renown than often falls to a young man; and when Jarl Sigurd grew too old to care to govern longer, the command slid over to the sturdy young shoulders so well fitted to receive it. And long before this Ulf had married Edith Fairhair, greatly to the regret of all the other young men along the coast.

But of all his treasures won in war or trading, nothing gave him greater honour than his white bearskin; for the fame of his winning travelled far, and was sung in winter nights by harpers round the roaring fire which peopled the far corners with ghosts and leaping shadows, which might well be the wraiths of bears and wolves still haunting the land where once they lived, and roared, and howled,— or so thought the younger people. If the truth be told, so thought not a few of the older ones too, for those were days when men believed in magic, and in the

power of dwarfs, elves and gnomes who were supposed to work in caves deep in the mountain sides, making magic arms, and other witchcraft things.

About this time, the great outside world began to move on a little faster. More was happening, day by day, worth remembering, and thus called History. Wars were afoot in half a dozen countries, and at last like a light flame war came flickering around the fjords, touching now here, now there. Even Sigurd's distant vik was beset, and Thorold the Strong, now as mighty a man as Thorolf his father, struck such strokes among the invaders that many supposed he was the leader, and told tales of the giant that made the pirates rather shy of coming back again.

Yet always in each tale, there was some word of another leader, and always word of a lost ship, sometimes of more than one; so when they talked it over it began to dawn on many that the stories told so fully were told by men who escaped from Thorold; but the tale was so scanty about the slighter leader in the glittering mail because men whom *he* met never came back to boast of it. When once he shot over the side of a longship at the head of his men, that was ever but the beginning of the end. Not many minutes later,

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war would cease on that particular craft, no one being left to defend it. This did not make the wise-heads anxious to try it for themselves. But for a while, hot-headed young men who wanted to win great fame in a voyage, without waiting for it to come in many voyages, as most must do, thought that a viking trip to Sigurd's Vik was the speediest way of getting it.

Now and then some young madcap would do more than think about it, and with cheers would sail away for Sigurd's Vik; but it is not recorded that many men thus won the fame they went for. So at last every one very sensibly decided that the Vik was an excellent place for fighting, but a still better place to leave alone, and then war died out, and slowly trade began again.

With the trade came news, as usual. Across the seas at no great distance lay Denmark. Further off yet was Britain, where the tin came from, and some gold. Now word came that in Denmark a mighty king had arisen, who had conquered all England, in Britain, and was now ruling both lands. Great was the wonder throughout all the Northland, for fierce were the fighters who dwelt in Britain, and such a deed had never been done before. This was better than fighting

off pirates in the mouth of a vik, thought Ulf. Moreover, the pirates had ceased to come.

So Ulf welcomed the traders heartily, and gave them good bargains; and in return, while he listened, they told him all they knew about the king, which was not much, to be sure. That he was not a very young man was certain, for he had a son as old as Ulf. But they told one strange thing about him at which all wondered. When the King was a young man of Ulf's age, he was as fierce a warrior as ever held a shield, and toward the conquered was as relentless as a wolf. They told wild tales of his cruelty then.

This was common enough in the world, and Ulf said nothing. But they went on to tell that which to Ulf was indeed a very curious thing. When England lay at this fighter's feet, beaten, every one expected as a matter of course that all the captured leaders would be killed, and all the gold, and furs, and lands would be seized by the King for his own use. But nothing of the kind happened! Instead, he began a rule so good-hearted, so fair and just to all, whether British or Dane, and toward past enemies as well as toward friends, that his enemies were more than half inclined to be friends. The country was growing rich in cattle, and was better to live in than ever

before,— indeed quite like Sigurd's Vik in that respect, a state of things natural enough where a Sigurd ruled, but not at all where a Knut did,— for Knut or Canute, as it is sometimes written, was this new king's name.

Lastly, strangest of all, this wild warrior, yet mild-ruling king, had proclaimed throughout the land that he no longer believed in Thor, nor Odin, nor the other cruel gods of the North, but declared that they did not even exist! He worshipped, they said, one God only, a merciful One, who did not love bloodshed and murder, for which reason there should be none of it throughout the kingdom. And there was very little of it indeed. Men knew so well what the King himself had done in that line, in the past, that they were in no hurry to disobey him now, lest perhaps they might find that he had forgotten nothing of his oldtime handy use of battle-axe. So there was peace from one end of the country to the other.

Now, Edith Fairhair sat in the highseat when this was told, and she became very curious about it. Ulf sat silently by, with his chin in his hand, with the firelight flashing from his mail, and listened. When the tale was told, and they were alone, they looked into each other's eyes, and both laughed softly, each reading the same thought.

"Would'st care to go, Edith?"

"Far hast thou sailed, Ulf, and much hast thou seen. Yet Vik-mouth is as far as I have travelled. I would like to see that fair land."

"There may be storms," he said, teasingly.

"I like storms."

"There may be pirates on the way." And his face grew sober.

"I am Sigurd's daughter, and the wife of Ulf," was the proud reply.

After that of course there was not much left to say; but all the same, Ulf looked more carefully into the strength of his longship that week than even he or Sigurd ever had before a voyage. Not an arrow went on board which he did not test with his own fingers, and send to the smithy if not perfect,—and who was a better judge of ironwork than he? While the men he chose for the crew were the sturdiest, toughest, craftiest set of rascals that ever sailed from a vik. Every one of them was fit to command a longship if the captain was laid low. And every man of them, because of it, knew how to obey on the instant, or if need be, to win a battle without orders. And in a safe hiding-place was a large bundle. It contained a present for the King.

Merrily flashed the sunlight on the oarblades. Edith Fairhair was brimming with questions, too excited to sit still. It was her first voyage, and Ulf the Silent talked more than he ever did before in his life, explaining things that he knew about and forgetting to answer when he didn't know. Once, on the voyage, they had a touch of war, and Ulf looked at Edith and felt a sudden thrill which he had never felt before when a fight was coming. If he lost now, he lost what a kingdom could not replace.

On came the enemy's craft with the swift confidence of many a capture. But while yet beyond bowshot it was suddenly checked and hung in the wind, even backing water a little. That stern, silent figure standing in the opposing prow seemed familiar to the wary captain. That glittering mail, the dragon-crest on the helmet, that too had he seen — somewhere. Ha! Now he remembered. Once before he had thanked his stars that his had not been the ship which the man in mail had boarded. There was no other ship to take the brunt this time, and his cheek turned a little pale.

The vessels drifted a little nearer, and the stranger hailed,

"Art thou not Ulf, of Sigurd's Vik?"

"Yea!"

A flutter swept through the stranger-craft, and a pause. Its men flashed at each other startled looks.

"Is it war?" the captain asked again, hoping his men would not note the little tremble in his voice.

"War have I seen," was the curt reply, and there was a twang as a bow was strung. Then Edith said a swift word to which Ulf listened, frowning, yet called to the undecided captain.

"Ulf, of Sigurd's Vik, has seen too much war to be afraid to offer peace to any man. Choose thou!"

The stranger laughed a laugh of relief, but said,

"Peace it shall be, since that is a new thing to both of us. I am Thorfin the Viking."

Ulf's face darkened.

"Had I known thy name before, the choice would not have been left to thee. It is peace for this time; but Thorfin the Viking will do well to sail south instead of north, for when we meet next Thorfin's ship quickly will need another captain," — which was a very long and unamiable speech for Ulf the Silent to make. And he allowed his ship to drift until the sail of the other had dropped below the horizon, still speed-

ing southward like a scared white rabbit, that is happy in a close shave from the snap of a wolf. Then Ulf swung his yard to the wind again, saying only,

"Truly, Edith, one sea-thief owes thee thanks to-night," and went his way.

Knut the Great sat on his throne-seat in his raftered hall. Here and there little groups of his chief men chatted and exchanged news, but Knut heard them not. The dark carving of his seat showed richly through the furs that draped it, and white gleams of walrus ivory lighted the darkness, but Knut saw them not. An official was giving an account of what had occurred of late in the village under his command, but for once Knut listened with only half an ear as he sat there with his chin in his hand, for from the shore below there came the soft wash of the ever restless sea which the King so dearly loved. The swash brought swiftly to mind the days of his youth when his life was all before him, and his kingdom was the length of his deck. Those were happy days, indeed, when the right ruling of a great land was not among his duties! For power has its own troubles, and the King would not be remembered so long had his reign not been a good as well as a great one.

The hum of voices came up from the shore, and all the well-known sounds of the harbour-life, the splash of a rope falling in the water, the thud of an oar flung down, the grating of a keel drawn up on the shingly beach. And suddenly he was conscious that it had ceased, all save the more distinctly sounding water. Surprised, he glanced quickly through the open door, and saw that all the shore-folk had stopped their work to gaze at a longship flying swiftly onward; a stranger, evidently, for a man was on the mast watching out for hidden rocks and pointing out the channel to the steersman. The long row of shields hung outboard on each side told that it was something more than a peaceful trader, and Knut watched with interest, motioning for silence.

With a rush the craft shot half her length on shore and her crew poured out in a well-trained throng, which without delay swung into column and headed for the hall. Knut the Great eyed them with admiration. Never had he seen a sturdier set of men; and something in the lithe young leader at their head, all glittering with shining mail, reminded him of his own lost youth, of which but the moment before he had been dreaming. A young woman walked by the captain's side, fair-haired, fair-faced, with a gleam of

gold in her collar and bracelets of gold on her round arm. Then at a sign, the men halted, and the pair came on alone.

With his curiosity aroused, and in the free manner of the times, the King left his seat and came to the entrance to meet them. The light was better out of doors.

Neither bow nor salute did the young man make until he was at the very portal; then he saw before him a slight, gray man, rather plain of dress, who looked rather than asked his business.

"Is this the hall of Knut the Great?"

"Yea."

"I have come to have speech with him."

"And thou?" The keen eyes supplied the rest of the question.

"Ulf the Silent, of Sigurd's Vik," was the brief reply.

The questioner started slightly as though the name was not unknown to him, and glanced quickly at the men beyond, but they had not stirred. Then after a moment, he said,

"Come!" and wheeling, led the way back to the audience hall. Ulf saw his guide stride forward to an empty throne-seat into which he sank, and with his chin in his hand said, quietly,

"I am Knut the King."

For a breathing-space Ulf halted, startled. This the King! Then he recovered his wits again.

"Sigurd's Vik is well governed; but men say England and Denmark are better ruled. This have I come to see, and with me Sigurd's daughter, now my wife." The King smiled, not ill-pleased at what he heard.

"Ulf, of Sigurd's Vik, is not unknown to me by hearsay, and right glad am I to meet him, and to talk of the ways of ruling men. Yet if what I hear be true, he need not cross vik-mouth to find just ruling."

And he had seats brought for them, and food and drink, as was the custom, sending, too, for his sister to receive Edith Fairhair as her guest. But Ulf, for once, appeared ill at ease to her who knew his ways so well.

Then the King began to talk of government in words so wise, so thoughtful, that he forgot his own thoughts and listened heartily, planning to make good use of what he learned, in after days. The other men in the hall had gathered to meet the stranger, and they, too, said their word now and then, for those were the days when every man who had a good word to say in council

was in no way backward about saying it. But some were not so courteous to the stranger as they might have been, and said one, when Ulf modestly raised a doubt in a case which he did not fully understand,

"Know thou, stranger, King Knut is more than king of men. The sea itself obeys him."

Had Ulf been older he would have passed it by unnoticed. As it was he merely asked Knut, with lifted eyebrow,

"Are these captains thine advisers?"

The King flushed hotly and turned to his flatterers.

"Sayest thou I am the lord of the sea — that it will obey my word?"

A dozen voices shouted "Yea!" in as many different ways. The King looked at them steadily for a moment, then with a half-smile waved his hand to his throne from which he had arisen, and said,

"Carry me that to the shore, and do thou attend."

It was low tide, but the young flood had begun to come in, and when the throne was placed well out toward the water, Knut seated himself and said,

"Wait! now shall we see the value of advisers."

Presently the incoming tide drew near, and the King arose, stretched out his hand to the waters and said,

"Back! I, Knut the Great, command thee. Back!"

Never a word replied the sea, but still the unceasing tide crept steadily on.

"Back, I say! Knut, Master of the Sea, commands it!"

Lip-lap, lip-lap came a gentle wave with a white fringe, circling in eddies landward, and splashed ever so gently under the royal chair; and if the King had not lifted them with haste the royal feet would have been wet. Then said the King, grimly smiling,

"It is well my men have proved their worth as captains, and need not be judged by this."

And his councillors were ashamed, and could not look him in the face for many days. But to Ulf he made presents of value.

Then said Ulf, with a rueful laugh,

"King Knut, I had deemed I had at least one thing worth offering as a gift to a King," and with the word he laid before him the white bear's hide, tanned with the head on, and in the cleft of it still stood the keen-edged battle-axe.

Knut's eye twinkled, reading now the reason

for the young man's discomposure, for in his hall lay stretched a wealth of just such trophies, and he asked how it was won.

"Singlehanded," said Ulf.

"A shaft to each leg, then spear to the throat and axe to the brain."

Then said the King, significantly,

"If I have eleven other bearskins, am I not eleven times the better able to know its worth? It *is* a gift for a King!" and Ulf was content.

And History tells that in after days, when King Knut wanted to make an especially valuable gift to the Minster of Crowland, he could think of nothing richer than twelve great white bearskins, one for each of the twelve Apostles. I like to believe that one of them had a deep cleft in the back of the head, where Ulf's axe sank in. But I think Knut knew the value of a good steel weapon too well to give *that* away, for we read in another book that such an axe once owned by him was handed down till Harold of England owned it, and with it he cut to pieces a suit of armour hung on a post, by way of showing his strength to the King whose guest or prisoner he was — for at the time he was a little of both. And every stroke slashed that armour in such great holes that I think the axe that did it must

indeed have been of Star, or nickel steel, and of itself a gift for a King!

For many a day Ulf dwelt with the King, and even sailed to Denmark with him for a space.

At last the time came for Knut to return to England, the larger country, where he lived for most of his reign, and Ulf went back with him and Edith with Ulf, of course. A mighty fleet sailed also,— never had either of them seen so many ships before,— and when the roll of the oars in the rowlocks came slipping over the glassy sea it rumbled like muttered thunder. Stirred by the sound, here and there the wilder blades among the crews remembered old war-days, and struck up the Northmen's warsong, the laughing, murder-singing "Yuch-hey-saa-saa-saa," that had carried terror with it to the lands beyond the water; and the trading vessels within hearing swung hastily southward and rowed away for dear life, fully believing that war had come again.

SPARK IX.

HOW THE STAR HELPED TO WIN A THRONE.

And war did come in time. Four kings rose and fell in Ulf's own lifetime. England was one great battlefield for many a year after Knut had died. Harold, Harthaknut, Eadward, and yet another Harold, one after another had their little say, and their own troubles, — the troubles of kings who know no better cure for them than war.

But Ulf was not of these. Too wise to linger long in that unfriendly air after the death of his friend the great King, he kept the seas as a free trader, and far and wide roamed the longship which he commanded. The gruff old captain who guarded the port of Wisby * against all sea-thieves, cracked his face into what was meant for a happy smile when his watchers told him that the inrushing craft looked surely enough like Ulf's. The laughter-loving fisherwomen of Marwyk † sprang up and threw silvery herring

* **Wisby.** A famous old walled town on the island of Gottland.
† **Marwyk.** An old seaport on the coast of Flanders.

at each other from pure glee when their farseeing eyes spied out the flag of his vessel and read its strange device. That flag was like no other's, for it was as black as a crow's wing, save in the centre, where gleamed in the snow-white embroidery of Edith Fairhair a snarling white bear's head.

Once, indeed, Ulf got lost. For three full weeks he never saw a star. For three full weeks, day after day, his vessel fled before the gale onward, ever onward, over the gray, desolate, wildly tossing water, until they had need to spread their sail to catch the rain, for watercasks were empty; and one dried herring per day for food was all that Ulf could spare his crew out of their scanty stock. Then the sun broke out warm and cheery and green isles began to show themselves.

"This is a new land," quoth Ulf. "I wonder much what races dwell in it," and kept all the brighter lookout.

Still, food must be had, and he was ready to pay for it with wealth or blows, — whichever

might be most convenient to the occasion. As it happened, the choice was not left to him, for two galleys darted out from a narrow strait, each flaunting a strange flag, blood-red, with a star and a single crescent pictured on it. Dark, swarthy faces rose above the bulwarks, and wild warcries in an unknown tongue.

"Allah! Allahu!"

Then came the hiss of javelins.

Cheerily laughed Ulf and all his men, amazed and amused at the odd white turbans and the white teeth showing so plainly against the dark of the threatening faces; and the Barbary pirates in turn were thunderstruck when, instead of cries of fright, out growled again that laughing war-song, the laughter of death which never failed to send a shiver through the hearer, be he never so brave, if he knew he had to face the singers. There were men on those galleys who had heard the "Yuch-hey-saa-saa-saa" before and knew well what was to follow. But flight was now too late. And thus the Iron Star first warred against the turbaned warriors of the Crescent.

Ulf found much spoil in those two vessels,— golden cups, beautiful silken robes, and jewel-hilted weapons,— after the slightly difficult task of taking them was over; and plenty of provisions

also, with which warily he turned square round on his heel and sailed back again for twice three weeks until he was in familiar waters once more, well content with what he had. As to the pirates, they deserved all they got, and Ulf and his men had a merry time with them while the fight lasted, which was as long as one was left alive. For those were wild times!

Scarcely were they in a safe port and rested, however, when great tidings flew abroad. How did such news travel? Ship told it unto ship, village sent word to village, perhaps signal-fires flashed it on from headland to headland, that in the north there was a great gathering of men of war, which always in those days meant battle. Hence Ulf wisely thought it well to fare northward himself and learn at first hand what it was all about. His hair was a little gray, now, and thin in spots where the helmet pressed; but his brain was just as ready for wise, long-headed plans as ever; and by his side a tall, slender lad now held his shield and guarded him when shafts were flying, and Ulf's own bow was bent. He, too, was one of the silent; yet, when asked, said he was Wulf, the son of Ulf of Sigurd's Vik.

So, one morning just at sunrise the flag of the White Bear's Head was floating in the land

breeze, as the longship made its way into harbour among a vast fleet of other craft,—so vast that Wulf was surprised into speech, and Ulf himself admitted that he never had seen the like. The shore was one great camp; an army gathered; and Ulf found himself nodding greeting to many an old acquaintance as they shouldered through it, Wulf and he, straight for the heart of the throng; Ulf still carrying in one hand his unbent sea-bow, and Wulf, the long, straight, two-handed sword of his father, as well as his own keen axe — of Star steel, both.

Under a large tent a consultation of leaders was going on, and a dark, thick-set, angry-looking man was laying down the law to them in the strongest words he knew — and he knew a great many — when Ulf strode in. The captain stopped. Flashes of recognition shot into a face here and there; a wrathful growl came from one group, in the back of which was the mean, crafty face of Thorfin the Viking. Then the dark man strode sharply forward with a hearty greeting.

"What, Ulf the Silent? So you too will help an old comrade? This is well indeed. But what are these fellows growling about, like so many white-toothed mastiffs?"

"I've met their mates and them at Sigurd's

Vik," quoth Ulf. "These few are what were left," and the other roared with laughter.

"You are the man I want, to keep these wild blades in order. A man like you is needed over them. I make you a sea-king here and now, and my clerk shall give you it in writing." And a sea-king Ulf was from that day, or, as we should now call it, "admiral," — that is to say, a captain over other captains. It made Thorfin very angry, but since he cared a great deal for his own skin, he took considerable pains to keep in good order for many a day to come.

"But first," said Ulf, cautiously, "Tell me what this is all about."

Now those were the days when a king looked on his kingdom very much as though it was his private farm. It, and the people in it, existed chiefly for his sole benefit; and if they objected, so much the worse for the people. So, when Duke William of Normandy told Ulf a long story about his troubles, how Edward the Confessor, King of England and his cousin, had promised that when he died he would leave the kingdom to William, Ulf saw nothing strange in that.

Why should not a man give a farm to his cousin when he died, especially when that cousin's wife, Matilda, was another cousin? Then Harold,

Duke of Wessex, had sworn by a whole tubful of relics of dead saints that when Edward died he would not stand in William's way. That, too, was a great thing to do. A promise ought to be kept to the letter, and how much more a sacred oath like that! — although men do say that Harold did not know there was a relic within a mile of him at the time he gave the promise.

But that promise Harold had not kept. On the contrary, he had claimed, first, that when he made it he had been shipwrecked on the Norman coast; he was really a prisoner, and gave the promise that he might get away; which as a matter of honour but made a bad matter worse.

Then, more reasonably, from our point of view, he claimed that the kingdom of England belonged to the English, and was not his to give. Englishmen had made *him* King, not William, and that was the end of it, — an answer which was likely to drive William nearly wild. And it did. William swore a great oath that before he died he would be King of all England. And Ulf, with many another, promised to help him.

Then Ulf went straight back to his ship again and that very night set a double guard as anchor-

watch, for never in all his life, he said, had he seen so many thieves together at one time, and so few honest men. All of those same thieves and the other few presently set sail across the channel; and, odd to say, to this day there are men who proudly claim that a very far back ancestor of theirs "came over with William the Conqueror." But perhaps they have made themselves believe that that particular person was one of those honest ones.

Ulf talked it over with young Wulf in the first watch that night.

"If England were one 'twould be a mad voyage," he said. "Mind thou this, Wulf, when thou art captain, one arrow can be broken. Two also. But to break a bundle is another matter. This Harold is a strong man, but he has only a part of the country behind him. His own brother, Tostig, has raised a fleet against him, Thor knows where."

"His brother?" and Wulf stared in amaze.

"So William says, and he is a fox. Tostig is a hothead; he cannot govern himself, so of course he cannot rule others. He was made lord of the Northumbrians because of his royal blood, but they were men, not thralls, and presently told him that his health would be better in another

land. Then he looked to Harold to help him with an army, but Harold found the Northumbrians were so much in the right of it that Tostig's rule was over, for help him he could not with any show of justice. Now, then, Tostig is sailing with the King of Norway, to raid the northern coasts."

"What! is Harold Hardrada of Norway with us too?"

"So William says. Harold Hardrada, the 'stern in council' is to strike at the mouth of the river Humber, while we land in the south country. It is easier so."

And it was. For the old story-tellers say that Harold of England marched with his army, night and day, to meet the raiders of Tostig; and with twenty of his house-guards he rode far ahead, hoping to meet and have peace with his brother and save England. Almost he succeeded, also, for he gave him a brother's welcome, a brother's love; promised him lands and a share in government; and Tostig was well-nigh persuaded. But he was in bad company. He had brought over this band of cutthroats, with the greatest of them all at their head, under promise of unlimited plunder. And now what about them? So he had to put the question to his brother.

"What shall be the share of my — friend, Harold Hardrada, who has come so far for me?" Then, they say, Harold of England gave a right royal answer. What was to be the share of this pirate?

"Seven feet of English ground for a grave. Or, as he is said to be a very tall man, perhaps we can allow him a little more."

If you would like to know more about Harold Hardrada, and what he did in his youth among the Turks at Constantinople, you can read a great deal in Sir Walter Scott's novel, "Count Robert of Paris," some of which, perhaps, is true. But, great fighter though he was, now was the time for his last battle; and on September 25, 1066, at Stamford-bridge, Harold of England met him and put him into the "seven feet of English ground" which he had promised him. It was a great victory, yet a sad one; for Tostig had refused the terms and fell fighting against his own countrymen, to be buried with the pirates whom he had captained. And in the South at Pevensey, four days later, William was landing.

Down came Harold from his victory, weary with fighting, weary with marching, yet sternly earnest to drive back the invaders and save the land from being harried, if he could. But Octo-

ber was half through before he met them at Hastings. All day long, on the 14th, they fought, and Harold held his own, though with the smaller army. Each man knew his place, and kept it, and William found them a wall of iron. At last his captains passed the word for a false retreat. The Saxons of Harold, with cheers, broke ranks to pursue, when round wheeled the Normans like hawks and plunged among them. Then came the crashing of battle-axe on helmet, and like a long, slow wave, the Norman line swept onward and the Saxon helms went down. A brief check around the summit of a hill, where Harold and his guards had rallied,—then arrows sped in flights upward to fall straight down among them. Their ranks were broken. And one by one each fell like a soldier in soldierly fashion where he stood with the loved captain among them. Just as, eight hundred years afterward in America fell the blue-clad soldiers around their general, Custer, fighting the Sioux Indians on the Western plains.

Thus William the Conqueror began to conquer England, and when he ended England was his own. Everywhere his captains built their castles, and where that captain was a Thorfin it was bad for the land. Still, now and then there was an

Ulf among them, or one like him, who knew better how to govern; and all was well with them and theirs for many days.

Do you care to know what next the fragments of our Star beheld?

SPARK X.

HOW THE STAR SANG A SONG OF FREEDOM TO A CAPTIVE KING.

Once again all England was under one King. It was a sad time for the English, for the word of the Northman was the law, and wherever there seemed need for it, a grim, gray castle towered up solidly above the forest, with a great ditch, called a moat, dug around it; and behind that water and those walls of stone lived Normans, as they now were called.

Ulf, like the others, had his castle, and governed broad lands; but so well, and so well did Wulf and Wulf's son in his time, that nothing of note ever happened there, and therefore nobody ever heard of them. No man's house was burned by them with the owner in it. No one's cattle were carried off to the use of the castle without just payment. No one was killed without good cause, or what, in those days, was thought to be good cause. So this part of England lived long in placid quiet. There was no other castle

within long marches through forest and bogland hard to pass over; and, for all of Ulf's peacefulness, if Thorfin, or some of his mates, wanted excitement, and thought it would be a good day to ride out and harry the land or besiege the home of a neighbour, someone would remember the old, old days around Sigurd's Vik, and suggest that to-morrow would be a better day than this to visit Ulf; the to-morrow that never came.

Daneshold they called it now; that is to say, the home, or hold of the Danes; and since they now spoke Norman-French more often than Saxon-English or Danish, Wulf's son was named Loup, which was pretty good French for "wolf;" and one more generation fled away under his rule, with nothing to record. Then came the day of his son in turn; Louis, or as he was now called in the new fashion, Louis of Daneshold.

Now Ulf had ploughed the sea so much in his youth that he was delighted to plough the land for the rest of his life. Wulf, as a boy, saw quite enough of sea-life to satisfy *him*. As it happened, Loup cared little for roaming; and the old traditions of the past were quite forgotten. But one day young Louis of Daneshold entered the armoury by chance, and came across a somewhat

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rusty old shirt of mail, quite out of style. He knew it must date back to the time of the vikings, and must have seen many a wild fray, and the fancy took him to polish it up and look for scars. In those days a lad was taught to shine up his armour as carefully as now he would be expected to polish his boots, and it was a pleasure to Louis to sit down with sand and buff-leather in the narrow window of the tower, and rub away at the steel until his arm ached. Then when the sunlight trickled over the mesh as brightly as it ever did, he began his scar-hunting. Then he rubbed his eyes with amazement, for scar there was none! Not a link was broken, not a dent. Only on one shoulder lay a thin shadow when the light was right, clearly the score of a swashing blow yet too shallow to be called a scar. What a wonderful thing was this!

He sprang up and slipped it on over his broad young shoulders. It fitted like a glove, and the sunset glow flushed in at the window and streamed across him in a ruddy battle-flood. In that same second he was seized with a longing to leave all this peacefulness, this land of lowing cattle and calm sunset, and see other lands and other ways of living. It was in his blood. A roamer he must be, as his great-grandfather had

been before him. Then and there he made up his mind to be in the fashion with the courtly world that stirred in the heart of England. He would join the Crusade!

Do you know what that was?

In Palestine lies the holy city of Jerusalem, the burial-place of Jesus. For hundreds of years men had journeyed there,— folk called them pilgrims, — because it was such a holy place that just to visit it was thought to make men better, and more sure of Heaven in the eternity to come. But the way was hard and dangerous, and the journey at last became almost impossible; for from the far East had come Arabs, Moors, Syrians, dark races who wore turbans, whose flag was red with a silver crescent in it, and who worshipped God in another and a bloodier way than ours. To them, also, Jerusalem was a holy place.

Westward their armies swept until at last they captured the city, and they hold it as a Moslem possession to this day, — though twice for a short time it was wrested from them by the armies of the West. It seemed to those western men a terrible thing thus to surrender the sacred city to the "infidel." So king after king planned expeditions, with his neighbours, and sailed away with their bravest knights and fighting-men to

recover it. These expeditions were called "crusades," and it was the third of these that Louis of Daneshold made up his mind to join.

Now, if he had been a great captain he would have sailed with a small army of fighting-men at his back, but being as he was, but a youth, with his war days all before him, he started more modestly; for in those times young men who had not learned by experience were content to work their way upward in the train of some knight of renown and wait for chances to win their names. Also, it was thought to be such a privilege that a famous knight was likely to have in his company as squires (as such usually well-born attendants were called) only the sons of his own personal friends; thus the best chance that Louis could obtain was but to be a squire in the troop of a poor knight who was quite unknown, and who was glad indeed to have a broad-shouldered youth along who paid his own way, and his own retainer's also, instead of asking payment.

So, while on ship and in camp, and on the journey, Louis was but one of a multitude, and his leader little better. But when they entered Palestine it was another story. Both were lightweights, and their horses stood the journey better than their comrades; thus gradually they

began to be in the leading troops while on the march. The old-style cut of Louis's armour had caused him some heartaches when he was with his plate-armoured mates, but the very uniqueness of it caused the leading knights to rest their eyes on him when scanning their men for a good one to send out as a scout, and after one or two trials they began to learn that in all their host they had no swifter horseman, nor a keener eye for an ambush; nor, when it came to the point, a deadlier swordsman than that same blue-eyed, fair-haired lad.

And at last there came a day when the army was in line of battle against the Saracen; when the Knights of the Temple vied with the knights of other orders each striving to carry their flag farthest into that thorny jungle of flashing scimetars, and the huge arm of King Richard the Lion-hearted hewed a red road for them all which none could equal; for was he not the strongest man in the two entire armies — this King who could sever an iron bar with a swordstroke? But ever as he plunged with fresh zeal and ringing warcry into the heart of the fray, he became aware of a knight and his squire that as surely as his shadow, kept but a pace behind him; and the blows that were struck in that fight under the

burning sun and with the loose sand of the desert underfoot made the day one to be remembered long by those that lived beyond it.

At last a fresh troop of tried warriors pressed forward on the wearied men of the West. Louder rang the shout of the turbaned men —

"Allah! Allahu!"

Backward, slowly yet surely, they drove their enemies everywhere save in that one spot where Richard swung his mace; and even he, too, gave place for a yard or two, leaving Louis and the other knight fighting like wildcats, back to back. Then Louis went down — down — into darkness. Of what happened next, how his leader for long minutes stood above him guarding both, till with a roar the angry King burst through the Saracens and rescued them, he knew nothing until he woke days afterward, feeling very tired, and a little light-headed, and oddly weak; just awake enough to wonder how he happened to be in a royal tent, watched over by a handsome, golden-haired young man, who smiled sunnily at him and talked to him in good French, saying that his name was Blondel. That Richard had declared so good a squire was worth being cared for by a king; and that Louis had but one business on hand, which was to go to

sleep again, which he presently very contentedly did.

Now, this is not a history of King Richard. If you would like to know more about him and what he did in England and in Palestine you can read two of Sir Walter Scott's best books, "Ivanhoe" and "The Talisman," and very stirring times they tell about. What we are most concerned with is what the fragments of the Iron Star saw in their travels, and one stout piece of its steel had now parted from its comrades for ever. In that terrible battle, what was the value of one sword, more or less, to the knights as they charged and fell back with the surging of the red tide? So the sword that Louis wielded lay uncared for where it fell.

Meanwhile, yonder in the royal tent Louis and Blondel had joyous times together. It was delightful for the young Englishman to lie back among his cushions, with a servant to fan him and hand him cooling drink, to watch through the looped-up doorway the men-at-arms without, wrestling, quoit-throwing, boxing, fencing, in the way that men of English blood, the world over, keep their muscles sturdy and lithe, quick to guard their heads.

It was blissful, though embarrassing, when

through the tent came Richard's stately little queen Berengaria, or her taller, more dignified cousin Edith, two of the most beautiful of women, and deigned to ask graciously, in the soft, low voice of pity, how he did. It was soul-stirring when the great King himself came striding in, perhaps full of wrath over some bit of statecraft gone wrong, perhaps joyous with the prospect of another battle; perhaps in as happy and more peaceful a mood, when he would seize the harp of Blondel and sweep the strings with massive, yet practised hands, and send his great voice rolling across the encampment in thundering song, like the impetuous Frenchman that he was.

For Richard I. was French! We are so apt to look on him as the King of the English, and as being so very much of an Englishman as to be the sample of the race, that we are apt to forget that although he was born in England his mother was French, his father French by descent, and Richard himself ruled England for the most of his reign from his home in France — when he was not off on a Crusade away from both countries — and carried on wars in France. All told, he did not live twelve months on English soil. But the knights of England were so French — Norman-

French — themselves that this did not greatly matter to them. Still less did it matter to Louis! But one day those great hands picked up the harp more hastily than usual and with a war-song clashed the strings; and presently there came a sharp twang or two, and the singer looked at Blondel like a schoolboy caught in mischief for the harp lay a wreck in his hands.

"Never mind, Blondel," laughed the royal culprit, "there is gold yet in our coffers with which to buy another."

"That may be, your Majesty," replied Blondel, ruefully, "But all the gold of Saladin could not buy what is not; and where to look for harp-strings in this land of sand is beyond me!"

Then spoke up Louis from his couch right gladly,

"But I have a set! I found them packed away with my armour by some mistake of a retainer, although I know more of sword-play than of music."

"Time enough yet for both, lad," cried the King. "The true knight is master of both, and knight shalt thou be when next on horse again!" A matter which indeed came to pass; for Richard laughingly declared that, considering that the young man already had fairly won his knightly

spurs in the field, never was a set of harp-strings so cheaply bought before as by the exchange just ordered. But Louis lay back on his cushions with his heart fluttering like a girl's, knowing well that it was but a jest of the merry monarch's, and that the real honour he meant the world to know was battle-won.

Thus he came back from Palestine "Sir Louis of Daneshold," with the red cross of the Crusader blazoned on his shoulder, and knighted by the King's own hand. And thus it came to pass, also, that Blondel struck up such a friendship for the giver of the harp-strings, and found them so wonderfully resonant, that when the expedition broke up and all started homeward, he insisted on going with him, at least part way. Thus they had a joyous journeying together by land and sea.

But one day, after they had parted company, word came to Blondel as he sang at the banquet table of a castle; a word carelessly spoken by a guest as of a matter which every one knew. And by cautious questioning he learned that Richard of England had never reached his kingdom; that Leopold, Duke of Austria, treacherously had made him prisoner while crossing his dukedom, whither a shipwreck had driven him, and handed him to an enemy of his, Emperor

Henry VI., who paid sixty thousand pounds for him and now held him chained deep in some one of the many castles of his domain. In which one, no one knew.

Richard a captive! Blondel could hardly credit it. He sang no more that night, nor for many nights.

Months afterward, a minstrel went roaming here and there, apparently aimlessly, throughout Germany. Everywhere the lovely music that breathed from his harp-strings made him welcome at the towering castles that surmounted the cliffs along the winding Rhine. His handsome face and joyous songs made him the favourite among the maidens and they begged him to pass the season as their guest; but no. For a week, perhaps, he would be with them, then like a swallow he must on again to other resting-places, and long afterward the young girls on the castle walls would sing at their tasks the snatches of melody left in their memories as he passed.

One day in the town of Dürrenstein the minstrel heard of an illustrious prisoner who was held captive in the castle of Trifels, surrounded by almost impassable crags. Much that goes on in the fortress becomes known outside in the market town, through the gossip of servants who

come down for supplies. They like to know what is going on in the world outside, and in payment for such news are ready to give the little items of castle life; how Hans the man-at-arms fell asleep on guard and got a week in the prison on bread and water in consequence; how the Spanish envoy tried to kiss one of the maids when he had taken too much wine, and thus had forgotten that he was a gentleman; and what happened in consequence of his forgetfulness. Little things, of no importance whatever to the world, yet with now and then a grain of wheat among the chaff. Thus Blondel found his grain of wheat.

Striking the strings of his harp he sang with a full heart the most joyous carol that he knew, a song so bubbling over with mirth and sheer happiness that the whole market-place seemed to wear a broad smile and the wooden shoes of the peasants kept time with clumping thumps in the dusty road to the rhythm of the tune.

The man-at-arms from the castle smote his thigh till all the joints of his armour clashed and rattled:

"And here I must back with this message without a halt, with music like that going on down below. Why, it's enough to make our

great noble in his dungeon forget his chains! Well, duty is duty. Here's my last coin, minstrel, for that song."

The minstrel laughed, throwing back his curly head and showing his white and pearly teeth.

" I pity thee, man-at-arms. 'Tis better to be a bird in the bush than in a cage. But this coin is heavy and I owe thee change. To-night, then, if thou art on the castle walls I'll come and sing to thee."

" It's a bargain! " and homeward rode the man in armour, clanking and clashing, and in his hoarse voice making vague shouts after bits of the carol that still haunted him, wondering meanwhile if the minstrel really would come.

He need not have wondered. Had not that minstrel wandered half over Germany expressly to sing under those walls? Hardly had the moon been up an hour, thus lighting a fearful way among those ledges, when step by step, hand over hand, up climbed the boyish form of Blondel, by a footpath way not by the guarded road, and with his harp upon his back. A moment to rest, a moment to take breath and to turn with his golden key the peg that tightened a string,— then soft, low, trembling like the wind that sweeps aimlessly, ceaselessly through the

sighing forest branches came the throbbing melody as the slender fingers strayed across the wires! whispering a song of love of bygone days when two were wandering under a glad, sunny sky in a free land, where birds in the near-by forest were nest-building, where sorrow, clouds and darkness were unknown. Then as the moonlight shone like a star on the steel helmet of the watcher who leaned so breathlessly over the battlements, into the night air far below him swung the rich, resonant voice of the musician, the words clear and cleancut, and of such a penetrating sweetness that the ironsheathed warrior above all unconsciously leaned still further over the stonework, and, hardened though he was, made no pretense to stop slow tears that came to his eyes and fell, drop by drop, to glitter like diamonds among the rough rocks far below.

The singer ceased. But the harp still kept up its rhythmic humming; and presently, muffled by distance and winding passages, as it seemed out from the very stones of the rugged tower, in a voice, harsh, strong, yet cultivated, came the second verse of that love-song, sung with a full heart, throbbing with a newborn hope, sung as never before had it been rendered in the old days

when Blondel had taught it to Richard in sun-scorched Palestine!

The watcher sprang up at his post, troubled, alert. What did this portend? He leaned over to seek that minstrel who sang to prisoners, and send an arrow through him; but the minstrel had disappeared; nor was he heard from for weary weeks; but then came from England a demand for release so peremptory that Henry sulkily felt compelled to accept the ransom money and set King Richard free. Blithely the King took leave of his surly host whose hotel bill was so high, as is somewhat the fashion in that region to this day. The sun shone gloriously as it seemed sun never shone before. The birds made the air ring with music. Yet no melody that Richard ever heard again was likely to seem as sweet to him as did that song of Blondel's when it came stealing so helpfully through the narrow slits that served as windows in his dungeon cell.

This is the legend. Possibly it is true. But there is another story told about it which perhaps is the real one: for men do say that the emperor, Henry, was so elated with his luck in having as a prisoner the man he hated that he had to tell someone about it. The friend he chose to tell it to was Philip, King of France, or else Philip

learned of it in some other way. At least he passed the news onward by letter to someone else; and so in time the ransom came and Richard was brought back again. I tell you this, because our story began in Myth, but now, as you see, already we have got to History.

SPARK XI.

HOW THE STAR WAS PRESENT AT THE GREAT GIFT OF THE BARONS.

If you think about it for a moment you will see that we cannot stop to tell of all the wonderful things which the Iron Star saw in its travels, nor can we talk of an event for every year. We must do as sometimes you see the swallows do when they go skimming across a lake, not stopping at every wave, yet now and then making a little splash as a beakful of water is scooped up, or perhaps a floating fly. And possibly you are wondering just why we took that last little dip of ours into the Crusades; but there was a reason.

You will remember that one of the first things that our Star did was to travel, and the boy and girl of that day travelled with it, thus seeing things which they never would have seen had they stayed at home. So now, the Crusades were the cause of many a young Englishman's starting off for a new land, and such of them as

came back brought with them new ideas and memories of many strange bits of knowledge to talk about in the long evenings. To a land of wool and leather they brought back silks and other luxuries, and they had discovered that there were good things to eat in the world besides beef and mutton or wild venison; and the dignified manners and stately speech of the Arab chiefs, whom they met in moments of truce, had their effect as models in spite of race hatred. These were not bad matters for England to know about.

Unfortunately, in such a time the best and bravest men are apt to be among the first to go, while those who stay at home are more likely to be of the less worthy. Prince John, who stayed at home, so proved himself. First, when King Richard was away fighting, and his mother, Queen Eleanor, was regent — that is to say, was ruling the land for him until he returned — John lived in England like a prince, and a very bad prince at that. He ran in debt, he lived fast, and by his example he set such a wicked fashion for his friends to imitate that, outside of his set, no one could live and be safe and happy, the prince acting very much as though he were already king. When it was reported that Richard was a pris-

oner, instead of planning how to help him, John said to himself,

"Hurrah! now I will be king for myself, not king for my brother!" and plotted to do evil with his new power. In "Ivanhoe" it is stated that he even tried to have his brother killed when at last he reached home from his prison beyond the seas. It is very likely, as you will see from what did happen later.

A large part of what is now France in those days still was under English rule; or, more correctly, England was ruled by the king of that part of France and by the warriors who had come from there. Richard and John, *both Frenchmen* by descent, had a young nephew named Arthur, who ruled over Normandy, Aquitaine, Bretagne and other French land, and this land John had long desired to add to his own private farm. One day Richard was killed while attacking a rebellious castle, and John at once said to himself,

"Now is my chance!"

He promptly made a prisoner of boy Arthur, and shut him up in a great tower. Very piteous tales are told of what happened next. Some say that John ordered a hardhearted servant to burn out Arthur's beautiful blue eyes with a hot iron. What John himself said was that "the boy died

in prison," and that to him as next of kin belonged those fair lands of Aquitaine beyond the English Channel.

But what the world said, and especially the Pope, who at that time was the all-powerful ruler of all Christian men in matters of right and religion, was,

"You murdered him for his lands; but it shall profit you nothing, for not one penny of his wealth shall come to you. Another man shall be the heir." And it was so.

This made John very angry, but that did not give him the money for which he had so deeply sinned. We in our day wonder that he himself was not put in prison and killed in punishment for the deed. But kings had great powers in those days. They could condemn a man to death if they would; if it was not done too often, the rest of the world felt to make sure that more heads were not loose on their shoulders, and were too grateful to find them safe to murmur about the fate of other heads, lest a worse thing befall.

Perhaps, when things became *too* bad, some revengeful man who had been deeply injured would try to meet evil with evil by murdering the king, or by getting up a war against him. In either

case, many innocent men had to suffer from the evils that grew out of it.

But one day a better way was found. Louis of Daneshold was now a grave, broadshouldered, powerful man. The Crusades had knit together the knights and barons of England into a close brotherhood, and for the king to harm one was likely to arouse the wrath of all. The young men who had faced the Saracens and fought shoulder to shoulder in Palestine were now in England the men of mark, whose words had to be listened to and heeded by all who would keep out of trouble. Hotheaded John was not one to put a check on his tongue when it would be wise to do so, and hardly was Richard buried when John found himself at odds with Louis and his comrades. They would not submit to his evil doings as king. They would not permit him to take for his own use the lands, cattle, money which they had earned by hard fighting. And finally, when he had a war of his own on his hands in Flanders, fighting French nobles, the English lords flatly refused to follow him across the water, since they had neither love for him as a king nor confidence in him as a leader; and as to the war itself it was king against baron, and they sided with the baron. As a consequence,

John came back to England again, well beaten; and he did not love those barons!

For a time after his return he tried to smooth things over and bring back the old way of kingly rule once more. But those stern-eyed men, clad in steel, had tasted freedom. They knew their own strength now. Was it likely that Louis of Daneshold, with the blood of Norse ancestors in his veins, and those Crusader comrades of his, every whit as sturdy fighters, would hold in great respect a tricky king, a murderer of little boys, a man who could not lead to victory in his own battle? No! a thousand times no! And iron clanged on iron when word from the King was brought to the nobles as they camped at London. Down came the mailed hand of many a knight with a resounding blow.

"No compromise! no treaty, save on our own terms!" was their warcry, and what those terms were, John Lackland of England was soon to know.

One thousand two hundred and fifteen was the year; twenty-four years after Richard's last Crusade, and his death. The world had been moving fast meanwhile. Freedom was thought more of. The younger men had grown up to be great captains in their turn; and in this year they did a

deed which was far reaching, for we feel the effects of it to this day.

Helmeted, and sword in hand, with a host of stalwart men-at-arms at their back, they called on John at Runnymede. It was not a friendly call. There was too much iron present for that. Iron glove meant iron hand that day, and John Lackland knew it. Sternly those assembled barons told him that the time for smooth words was past. "The divine right" of kings had been held up to the broad light of a modern day, and found to be motheaten by time. Its fabric was thin as cobweb, and there was nothing "divine" about it; nothing but the plain fact that "king's right" was merely the might of the strong, not the right of the just, and if it must come to that, they were muscular Christians too, and could behead a man as well as another. So then and there they laid before him a written agreement or "charter," as they called it, and told him to place at the end of it the written signature of the king, which would thus make it the law of the land.

It was a bitter moment for that sullen king. He would have refused to sign it had he dared. But there, to right and left of him, scowled the menacing faces of the fiercest fighters in all England. Crusader waved his hand to Crusader

across the hall, and in that greeting the low clash of steel rippled through the ranks. To refuse that signature meant — not the death of his friends, his comrades, his helpers in doing evil. That result not greatly would have troubled him. No! It meant what to him was a more serious matter. It was his own life now which he must buy by his signature, or die. He was not ready for that, so John Lackland of England signed the charter.

What a great thing for England and the world it was! for among other things the agreement read that

"No FREEMAN SHALL BE IMPRISONED OR PUT TO DEATH, OR HAVE HIS PROPERTY TAKEN FROM HIM, BUT BY THE JUDGMENT OF HIS PEERS [his equals] OR BY THE LAW OF THE LAND!"

And now, seven hundred years later, if it is claimed that a man does wrong and breaks the law he is arrested and brought before a judge. But before that judge can sentence him to death or long imprisonment the whole story is told before twelve men, called a jury, who decide whether he deserves punishment or not. And this is the great gift handed down to us by those barons of old from the days when, if he wished a person's death, it was enough for a king to say, "I do not like that man!"

To this day we speak of that agreement as "the great charter;" or more often, we use the words of the Latin language in which it was written [since all learned men then, whether Saxon, Norman, French or Dane, could read and understand that common tongue], words which mean the same, and we call it

"MAGNA CHARTA."

SPARK XII.

AND HOW IT WENT HALF ROUND THE EARTH, YET CROSSED AGAIN AT LAST THE TRAIL OF LEIF ERICSSON.

A THISTLE bloomed in a garden. A small boy forgot to pull it up. His twin sister saw it, but said that thistle-pulling was not her work, so it went to seed. One seed was caught up by a wind and went drifting, drifting, a little balloon of thistledown, until it reached the clouds and travelled westward with them for thousands of miles. Then the cloud struck a mountain and burst into rain. The seed went down among the drops. Months afterward a boy with a dark skin came stealing along that mountain slope, trying to get shot at a deer, and put his bare knee on an unknown plant that pricked him sharply, — so sharply that he said, "Oh!" or

a word in his language which meant the same. It was lucky for the deer, which took fright and ran away, but the boy had no dinner that day.

I like to think that splinters from my Iron Star are journeying across the world somewhat more solidly than thistledown, yet making themselves felt wherever they stop to rest. I like to think that possibly one splinter was forged into the identical steel needle which formed the indicator in the office of the first Atlantic cable, that three-thousand-mile-long wire, covered with gutta percha to keep out the salt water, which was laid from England to America under the ocean. You know that we telegraph by electricity, which is lightning in harness. But you may not know that this first deep-sea wire sent messages which were read by the way in which a flash of light was reflected in a mirror, wavering to and fro; and that the very first message was a greeting of peace and goodwill from Queen Victoria to President Buchanan.

The first message sent by the cable read as follows: —

"*To the President of the United States, Washington:*

"The Queen desires to congratulate the President upon the successful completion of this great international work, in which the Queen has taken the greatest interest.

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"The Queen is convinced that the President will join with her in fervently hoping that the electric cable, which now connects Great Britain with the United States, will prove an additional link between the nations, whose friendship is founded upon their common interest and reciprocal esteem.

"The Queen has much pleasure in thus communicating with the President, and renewing to him her wishes for the prosperity of the United States."

Let us pick up the thread of the story of one sharp splinter which we have lost sight of; — the sword which Louis of Daneshold lost in battle, which Wulf had carried and which Ulf had made far back in the days of the Northmen.

Men do not linger long around a battlefield after the fight is over, unless it is their fate to stay there forever; and with rattle of mailed harness and blare of trumpet-calls the Crusaders tramped heavily away through the sand, leaving behind them here and there a red spot on the earth, here and there a Saracen. Then, in time, a lightfooted, lightfingered troop of Arabs dashed into the little valley, sharply scanning the ground to right and left for forgotten weapons worth the picking up.

One wild, swift riding young fellow came sweeping along with his white burnous, or robe, trailing behind him in the air, and down he bent to earth like a circus rider as his eye caught a flash of

sunlight. With a shout of triumph he snatched up a straight cut-and-thrust sword, which in weight and size seemed exactly made for him. This was unusual luck; for, as he said gleefully to his comrades, while Frankish swords were not uncommon trophies of war yet usually they were heavy, clumsy things, not easily wielded by the hands of Eastern men. So, that night by the camp fire at the little well under the date palms, Mohammed Ali Ben Ibyn, no longer a wild, reckless horseman, but a grave, dignified young man, thrust a fresh coal into the bowl of his long stemmed pipe, handed it politely to an elder friend, and beckoned to a slave to bring him that new weapon from his tent. Taking it he made a few passes and cuts at the empty air to learn the balance of it, then set the point of it on the metal boss of a small shield at his feet, steadily pressing downward.

Down, down went the hilt while the splendidly tempered blade curved under the pressure into a bow, until before their astonished eyes hilt and point kissed each other. Then the spring of the steel slowly overcame the muscle in the arm that bent it, and the hilt turned ever so slightly in the hand, yet quite enough; for the point glanced from the metal and sank into the leather, the

blade sprung into line, and with a whiz the little buckler slid out from under foot, flew up from the sand as though it had wings and skimmed away far beyond the firelight.

"Allah kerim!" cried the astonished Arab. "God is merciful! This is a sword for a sultan. See, it is as straight as when it was made. No chief in the army of Saladin has a better blade."

"True, O son of Sheik Ibyn. The blade is perfect. But the hilt is not. Seest thou not that it is made like the cross of the infidel, the unbeliever? Good luck will not follow thee, wielding that sign."

"That is easily remedied, —" began Mohammed Ali, but got no further; for from one of the other fires a tall Arab stepped forward, clad in a long robe and a white turban, and with a beard that reached his waist. Lifting his powerful voice he sent it forth in a chant that made itself heard from end to end of the camp; and far out in the surrounding desert the jackals that whined and skulked among the sandhills dropped to earth hushed by the sonorous call. Not a leaf in the palms was astir. Not a breath of the night wind swayed a tent curtain. The chant rang through a stillness broken only by the low snap and crackle of the fires.

"Ashhadŭ ăn la illáh illa-llah,
Ashhadŭ anna Mohammadar ra-sool ŭlla."

chanted the long robed priest. "God is God, and Mohammed is his Prophet! There is no God but God! To prayer, O sons of the Faithful!—" just as at that hour, all over Arabia, other priests in other places were sending out their warning summons in camp and city, under the palms and from the lofty minarets of countless round-domed mosques or temples, wherever ruled the might of the Eastern faith.

Forth from their fires stepped the dark skinned warriors and formed in line, facing Mecca, the birthplace of their prophet Mohammed, and to them a most holy place. Not ashamed were they to say their prayers to the Father of All, nor to ask for help and guidance; and the wildest fighter of them all knelt and prayed as earnestly as a child, knowing well that if God was with him it mattered nothing if the whole world was against him; although in the desert the Arab's own proverb says that "No man meets a friend."

Then, their prayers ended, it was night, and time for sleep. And, after all, it was not Mohammed Ali Ben Ibyn's hand which put a new hilt to that sword, but another's; for its fame, in that land where a good weapon is beyond price,

was carried from camp to camp, and the sword itself became the cause and centre of a little war all its own. Once a man stole it, and on a swift camel he fled by night only to fall into the power of still greater thieves and wickeder men. Thus the sword, like a firebrand, was passed from hand to hand. At one time it even got as far south as Abyssinia, in Africa, and became by purchase the property of a Hamran Arab, one of the most daring, reckless, fearless, skilful hunters that ever walked on earth, as his people are to this day.

He was one of four brothers, and every day in the hunting season they used to ride out together elephant hunting, yet armed with nothing but their swords. In spite of his great size an elephant is wonderfully quick in movement, and it is a good horse that can outrun him. Yet one of these four brothers, the smallest and lightest of them, would ride up close to the head of a wild elephant and tease him into a charge. The instant that the great ears were cocked forward and the wicked little eyes flashed the warning that he was coming, round would whirl the good horse and away he would fly with the great grey beast striding after him like a runaway steam-engine, screaming with rage. Then up from the rear would come the other brothers like hawks;

a leap to the ground while at full speed, sword in hand! a swift, circling blow, and the steel would bite deep into the thick leg just above the heel, and like a gadfly the hunter would be away and in saddle again before the blow of the whistling trunk could reach him.

Another tempting by the youngest brother, another vain charge, another flash of the circling sword in the sun, and with the sinews cut in both hind legs that elephant's running days would be over, and presently he would die almost a painless death from loss of blood, slain in spite of his great size by just two strokes of a sword! Then at the nearest village there would be great rejoicing. The young girls would clap their hands and praise the courage of the brothers; all the older people would sharpen their knives and prepare to go to market, for even one elephant could not be carried home in a basket. It would provide steaks and roasts enough for a whole village; while the four brothers would carefully cut out the great tusks of gleaming white ivory, — each perhaps weighing half as much as a man, and worth a little fortune to them when traders reached their tribe. For such ivory was sold from hand to hand until sometimes it reached even far-away Britain,

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where it was made into sword-hilts, thrones, and other things for kings.

Those were peaceful days for the sword, and useful ones. It is no small matter to provide food for a whole village full.

Centuries rolled away, and men went with them. From hand to hand went the sword of Ulf, ever the possession of one who knew its worth, and more than one etched on its blade, with acid or otherwise, brief sayings, each in their own tongue — now forgotten; just as even nowadays you may sometimes find on a Spanish blade some good word as a warning to the user, such as,

"Draw me not without cause; sheathe me not without honour."

One day, to Ghent, in the Netherlands, there came a man, short, though broadly built. His hair was chestnut, and in his eyes there was a glint of the same red, especially when he was angry, which was not seldom; for as he said of himself, "A little pot is soon hot."

English he was by birth, and of a noble family; yet for many a year he had lived the life of a soldier, and to some of the great captains who warred in that time against the Turks he was not unknown as one who did daring deeds when

in the mood, or when it was his duty. In Ghent, then, there lived an old armourer to whom this man did some great service in protecting his goods and very possibly his life from robbers.

The soldier made light of the matter, but the old armourer took a different view and was very grateful; so grateful, indeed, that from his store of arms of all sorts he brought forth a curious sword which had a curious story, for he told a long, rambling tale of love and war in which the weapon had figured, claiming that it came from Persia last, yet was made in Damascus, a city of great fame as a place where the best sword-blades were forged. It was of splendid steel, it is true, yet if the old man had trusted his eyes instead of his ears he would have seen that, whether it came last from Persia or not, whether the hilt was put on at Damascus or not, yet that nearly straight, cut-and-thrust blade was not the fashion in which Eastern swords were made. On the contrary, it was distinctly a Western style. This weapon the armourer insisted on the soldier accepting as a gift; and he, seeing how much the giver desired it, was not unwilling, taking care at a later time to do the armourer another good turn in a matter of a large order for arms and

armour, although the old man knew it not. Thus he kept the balance of favours even.

Now this sword had inscriptions etched on it in unknown tongues, and also the sun, moon, and stars of the night deeply bitten in by the craft of some former owner. I will not say that it was the sword of Ulf. I will say only that I like to think it might have been; for the short soldier took it, whistled it through the air around his head a few times, and straightway went and had a few signs of his own engraved upon it.

In Holland at that time there was a little company of English men and women who had come over there because of trouble about religious matters at home, where they were not allowed peaceably to worship God in the way they thought was right. They were planning to go to the new world which had been discovered across the seas, and it seemed to the impetuous soldier that they would have need of him in such a journey, so he went with them. They did not sail direct from Holland, but went over to England again first, and sailed from Plymouth. Do you not know now the rest of the story without my telling it? Do you not know that the famous sword of that fiery little soldier, who valiantly stood so many times between those wan-

derers and death, is now to be seen among the most precious relics treasured at the old town of Plymouth, Massachusetts? And the name of that sword was "Gideon," and the name of the noble, quick-tempered, warm-hearted little soldier, a name which will be remembered as long as the United States of America exist, was Captain Myles Standish.

FINIS.